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ABSTRACT

A special issue of a journal devoted to women's literacy education contains the following articles: "Literacy: A Tool for Empowerment of Women?" (Agneta Lind); "Khulumani Makhosikazi: Women and Literacy...Some South African Women Speak" (Dawn Norton, Carola Steinberg); "Tomorrow Will Be Different: A Literacy Course for Women--An Experience from Santiago, Chile" (excerpted from a book by Peggy Moran and Monica Hingston); "Keeping the Circle Strong: Native Women's Resource Centre, Toronto, Canada" (a group interview); "On the Training of Tutors for Women's Literacy: A Woman's Experience with Women in Greece" (Danae Vaikoosi); "Expanding the 'Generative Word' Process: Women's Iron Will, Haiti" (Beate Schmidt); "Publishing Women's Stories: Parkdale Project Read, Toronto, Canada" (Janet Ryan and others); "Developing Reading and Writing Skills: SISTREN's Research Workshop" (Honor Ford-Smith); "A Literacy Kit for Peasant Women in Mexico" (Leonor Aide Concha, Maria del Carmen Montes, Sylvia Van Dyck); "1990 International Literacy Year: Agenda, Comments, Challenges"; "Five Challenges to Women's Literacy"; "Deepening the Issues and Objectives of ILY" (Judith Marshall); and "Sobering Thoughts: Literacy for What? Strategies with Women in Mind" (Lalita Ramdas). Also included is a "letters" section containing program descriptions, ideas, and network-building information from various parts of the world, and a section announcing and reviewing resources. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial 1

Section 1: Social Dimensions of Literacy

Literacy: A Tool For Empowerment of Women? 4

Khulumani Makhosikazi: Women and Literacy. . .Some South African Women Speak 8

Tomorrow Will be Different: A Literacy Course For Women – an experience from Santiago, Chile 12

Keeping the Circle Strong: Native Women's Resource Centre, Toronto, Canada 13

Section 2: Methodologies And Materials

On The Training of Tutors For Women's Literacy: A Woman's Experience With Women in Greece 17

Expanding the "Generative Word" Process: Women's Iron Will, Haiti 19

Publishing Women's Stories; Parkdale Project Read, Toronto, Canada 21

Developing Reading and Writing Skills: SISTREN's Research Workshop 23

A Literacy Kit for Peasant Women in Mexico 24

Section 3: Challenges for Women's Literacy

1990 International Literacy Year: Agenda, Comments, Challenges 25

Five Challenges to Women's Literacy 26

Deepening the Issues and Objectives of ILY 28

Sobering Thoughts: Literacy for What? Strategies With Women in Mind 29

Section 4: Building the Network 30

Section 5: Resources 37

Voices Rising is the central networking tool of the ICAE Women's Program, and aims to: promote the sharing of experiences, provide a forum for debate and discussion of key issues for women educators, share information on useful resources, and foster the development of a feminist practice in popular education which makes connections between broad social struggles and the personal issues and oppression women face in their daily lives.

The ICAE's Women's Program links educators and organizers in different regions of the world who are working to develop education as a tool for social change and empowerment of women.

The Women's Program office is located in Toronto, Canada with a staff of three full-time workers. Special projects are coordinated by key contact groups and individuals in different regions. Overall direction and planning is provided by an international advisory committee.

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is an international non-governmental organization with national member associations in over 90 countries, and networks in a variety of areas, including : peace, literacy, community health and popular education, worker's education, and participatory research as well as the Women's Program. All networks are decentralized and coordinated by individuals and groups in different regions of the world.

The following agencies provided support to this issue of *Voices Rising*: SIDA, Finnida, NORAD, NOVIB, and the World Council of Churches.

THE LITERACY ISSUE:
Feminist Perspectives on Reading and Writing

EDITORIAL

In what ways is literacy an issue for women? What are the practical and theoretical implications of a gender perspective in this field of educational work? These are the broad questions addressed by the articles, reviews and resources in this special issue of *Voices Rising*. 1990, International Literacy Year, and the new decade which it heralds, presents an opportunity for reflection on the feminist challenge to literacy theory and practice, for learning from the ways in which literacy workers are reformulating literacy as a women's issue and for ensuring that this re-visioning is taken up more broadly within our movement.

One recurring theme in the following pages is that of critique--the exposure by women practitioners and learners of the multiple ways women have been excluded from "literacy"--from its achievements, its programs, its measurements, its conceptualization, from definitions of its relevance and meaning, from its methodologies and strategies. A second theme, not surprisingly, is innovation--the diverse and creative attempts to redress women's marginalization and to integrate women's interests and perspectives into the very meaning of the term "literacy" (and its obverse, "illiteracy"), into pedagogies, into the personal desires and political possibilities of literacy acquisition. The examples we include represent but a sprinkling of the creative energy and skill literacy practitioners and learners are bringing to this field.

There has been a shift over recent years in how questions of women and literacy are being posed, one that parallels the broader feminist critique of education. Earlier feminist questioning was very practical, and drew attention to the high incidence of what is officially defined as "illiteracy" amongst women, as opposed to men, in most countries; the logistical difficulties women face in even attending school or adult literacy classes; the threats of violence, physical and psychological, that women are often subject to when striving to become literate; and the irrelevance of the content of many literacy programs to the daily realities and needs of women's lives. Literacy programs were shown to reinforce oppressive and limiting gender stereotypes and to oftentimes rely on teaching and learning practices that further silence and discourage women. These revelations and the issues they raise for literacy workers and programs are summarised in "Literacy, A Tool for Empowerment of Women?" by Agneta Lind.

Inevitably, the illumination of women's specific experience of literacy and illiteracy as distinct from that of men led to a more profound critique. The emphasis shifted away from attempting to understand literacy as a problem for/of women--with an implicit notion that illiteracy, like poverty, are ultimately the "fault" of those who experience them. There is now more concern to understand the ideological assumptions and judgements loaded into the concepts of "literacy" and "illiteracy" in different social contexts, and within that to see how women are silenced by and precluded from these social constructions of what it means to be "literate." In this way literacy/illiteracy become part of the process of organizing and reinforcing gender, race and class subordination.

The promotion of literacy--and the promise that it holds out--is couched differently depending on social and political circumstances. In the ideology of capitalist industrialized countries, literacy is presumed to offer "individual advancement," or in more progressive terms, "personal empowerment." But as feminists are showing, the relationship between the acquisition of reading and writing skills and empowerment is different for women than for men, and depends, among other things, on increased economic opportunity and a reorganization of domestic relations. In countries of the South, the attempts at "functional literacy" often associated with national development policies often further disadvantage women whose lives are centred in the "non-productive" sphere (see Lind). We've also seen in recent years how gender relations limit possibilities for women's empowerment even in situations where literacy is presented as an aspect of popular political mobilization--such as within oppositional social movements or pre-and post-revolutionary moments (see "Khulumani Makhosikazi" from South Africa and "Tomorrow Will Be Different" from Chile).

This is not to suggest that learning to read and write, or more broadly, the acquisition of literacy, is not empowering for women--individually and collectively. But neither can it be taken for granted. It is in the tension between the potential and the limitations of literacy that feminist literacy workers and women learners face a major challenge, finding ways to work together to redefine how--in each specific social context--literacy can embrace and further women's practi-

cal and strategic gender interests. Only from this base we can expect to develop approaches to literacy that are truly empowering for women and men.

After Agneta Lind's overview, the articles in the first section critically explore the implications of gender in specific literacy programs in South Africa, Chile, and Canada. They show the interrelationship of "illiteracy" with race and class as well as gender, and situate the struggle for literacy within broader struggles for social transformation.

The second section includes descriptions of literacy training pedagogies, methodologies and materials. These provide but a glimpse of the innovative approaches and tools being developed in various parts of the world to facilitate the questioning of gender oppression.

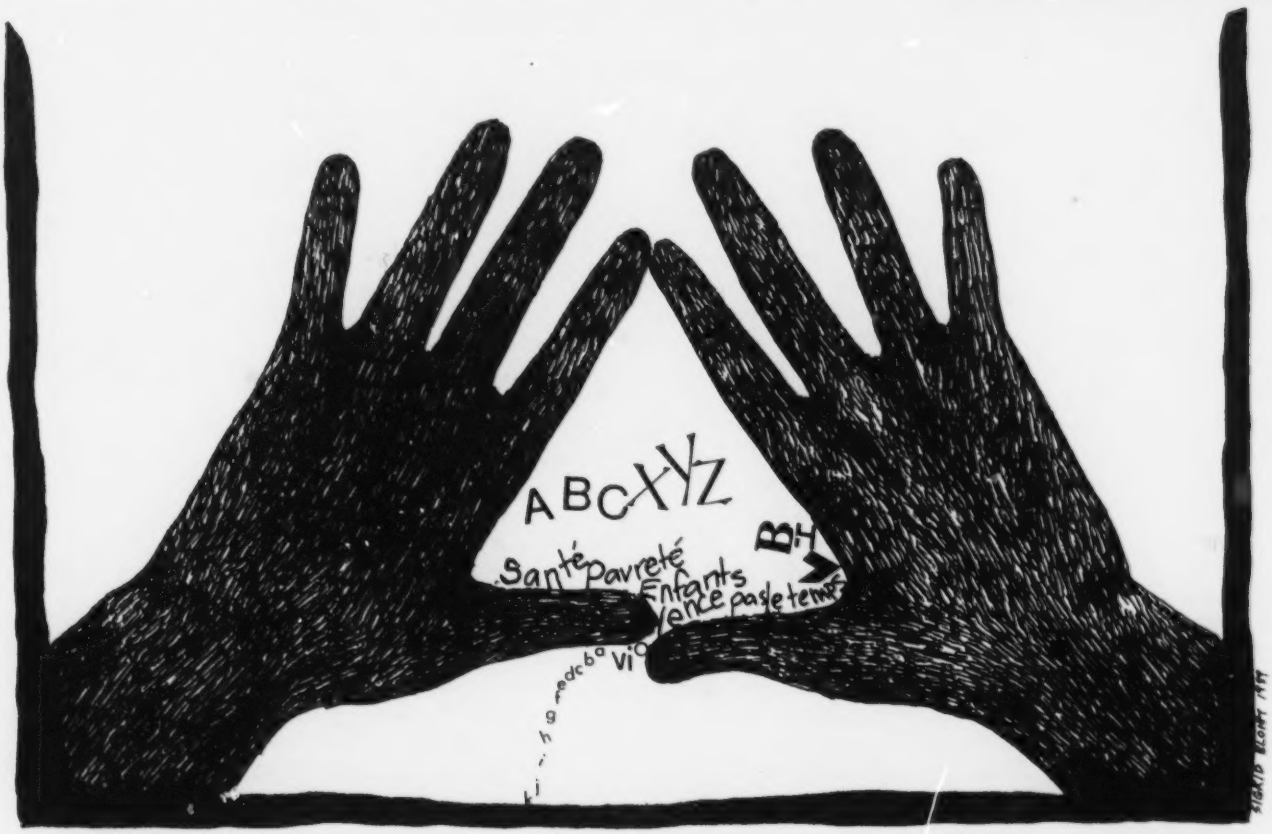
The special section for International Literacy Year sets out a series of challenges to the direction of literacy programming and policy-making. These represent some of the critical re-thinking of literacy which has been given new impetus in recent years by feminist theory and practice. International Literacy Year will no doubt stimulate further evaluation of both official and non-governmental initiatives. We look forward to hearing your views.

We're well aware that despite the many complex issues raised in the pages of this issue, many others are not addressed or named. Like in so many areas of women's popular education, our written reflections are scarce compared to the wealth of experience and the analyses that tend to be confined to informal discussions and individual reflections. We still know too little about the range of programs and experiments being attempted, and the related problems that keep us arguing late into the night.

We don't want to end with an apology about what's missing. This issue represents an important step in deepening the discussion about women's empowerment, gender and literacy. One central conclusion needs to be highlighted from the contributions in this issue and the discussions that have surrounded it: the feminist critique of literacy, and the development of appropriate strategies and practice, must be based very directly on women's understanding and experience of illiteracy/literacy within their daily lives, as well as within the broader structures of oppression that govern their lives.

But the questions remain: What is the relation between women's empowerment and literacy? What are the implications of a gender perspective in literacy? Let's continue to share and learn from our different contexts, approaches, and politics. What is your experience? What problems are you coming up against? What makes you mad? What small or large successes can you share? What questions do you want discussed and debated through the network?

Thank you to Susan Turner who coordinated and edited the material for this issue, and also, to the activists from the Toronto literacy community who met with us twice early on in the process to help provide a framework and ideas for content.



The Women's Program

You might be interested to know that:

◆ Several women from our network attended the first ICAE three-week international leadership workshop in international adult education which took place in Santiago, Chile, September 1989. In fact there was, quite surprisingly to all, a majority of women. The workshop was coordinated by Teresa Marshall, coordinator of the ICAE Health and Popular Education network and Lynda Yanz from the Women's Program.

◆ In late October, the Women's Program held its first Advisory Committee Meeting in Toronto to discuss program priorities and recommendations from the first draft of an organizational review. Twenty key contacts from regional networks and working committees attended. Two important outcomes were: a draft Statement of Mission which we will be circulating for improvement and endorsement over the next months, and a plan of work for an important new program initiative, an "international gender and popular education research project." (See insert).

◆ On November 3 we hosted "Up In Alms, Women's Organizations Worldwide Confront the Funding Crisis," a public forum to stimulate discussion and debate on the current trends and policies of international development agencies, and their implications for women's organizing, at national, regional and international levels. See the next *Voices Rising*, for excerpts from presentations. Send us your insights and questions so that we can catalyze a broader debate and more effective strategizing on how to front the pressures on women's organizing internationally.

Two special initiatives in 1990:

◆ In February 14 women from our network (from the West Bank, Egypt, India, Thailand, Mexico, Peru, Quebec, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mali, Canada and Zimbabwe) will take part in a two-week exchange visit to literacy and health programs in Tanzania and Mali. The project is being co-sponsored with the Women's Network of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE).

◆ In May, the Women's Program, working with the Center for Women's Resources in the Philippines, will sponsor an Asia regional 2-week training program for representatives of groups engaged in educational/organizing work with women. The aim is to share the effective and empowering methods and strategies that women have developed.

Staff changes in the Women's Program Toronto office

Jane Gurr, who has been working with us for the past three years, has decided to move to Ottawa. She'll continue to coordinate the Africa exchange visit. Sigrid Blohm, who has been doing all the Women's Program design and layout for over two years now, will be leaving us for an eight month trip which will take her to Nicaragua, the Soviet Union and Asia.

Dena Hamid has joined us as receptionist and bookkeeper. Dena's roots are in Trinidad; she's recently moved to Toronto from England; and is currently working with a schooling project in the South Sudan and as a community radio journalist for a weekly program called "Third Wave".

That leaves Lynda, Shannonbrooke and Dena "womanning" the office, since current financial realities make it impossible to think about quickly replacing those we're losing. Ruth Lara, Linzi Manicom, Katebi Kidd, Anibal Viton and David Smith continue to help us out on part-time and volunteer bases.

LITERACY - A Tool for Empowerment of Women?

From her paper presented at the Symposium on Women and Literacy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Stockholm, June 1989.

Literacy is one of the first steps in a process of enabling women to take control over their own lives, participate on a more equal basis in society, and eventually free themselves from economic exploitation and patriarchal oppression. In addition to social justice, human rights and equality, there are many other human, social and economic reasons to urge governments and organizations to take special actions to make literacy education for women and girls a priority objective during International Literacy Year and afterwards.

Gender Disparities

Sixty three percent of the world's approximately one billion illiterate people is female; the official estimate is 561 million women (UNESCO 1988). And the proportion of women illiterates is steadily growing. In absolute numbers the greatest increase in women's illiteracy was in Asia: 109 million between 1960 and 1985. In those same years the number of illiterate women in Africa rose by 44 percent, from 68 to 98 million; the increase among males was much smaller. In Latin America the increase and difference between women and men is negligible. The statistics highlight the de facto discrimination against women in education. Various forms of patriarchal and economic oppression subordinate women according to the history and culture of each country and region. Influences from pre-colonial traditions, as well as colonial and post-colonial imperialist conditions all account for the specific situation of poor illiterate women today.

Lack of access to school accounts for most adult illiteracy. The traditional sex division of roles in the family and in the society exclude most girls from learning literacy through schooling. When girls enrol in schools, education often reinforces their subordination. Even if the open discrimination practiced during colonial days is less common today, patriarchal ideologies and social systems that discriminate against women have persisted. Many researchers have shown how education systems reproduce not only the social class power structure, but also the existing gender differences. A truly equal access to formal schooling is still a right that must be pursued, and literacy for women needs systematic critical research.

by Agneta Lind, SIDA, Educational Division

Women's Response to Literacy Activities in Different Contexts

Between 70 and 90 percent of enrolled literacy learners in many African countries are women. But women's dropout rate is high and their attendance irregular. Studies show that it takes longer for women than for men to become "functionally literate". Women's motivation for literacy is partly linked to changes in the social roles of men and women. Women in many Third World countries are now active in areas that men previously monopolized. With the migration of men to towns to take up employment, women have been left in charge. Women in this situation see literacy as an instrument for coping with their increased responsibilities. Women also want to be able to read their husbands' letters and to write back without the help of others.

In South Asia women participate less than men in literacy. The hindrances of poverty, religious and cultural traditions, and the social and political milieu, impose a strict enforcement of the economic and social subjugation of women. Without there being accompanying social change, literacy does not present a way out of the existing subordination of women. Women are certainly aware that the common constraints on their participation in literacy - lack of time, overwork, male resistance - are not easily overcome. Successful cases such as the Self-Employed Women's Association in India show that only when literacy is linked to making women aware of the causes of their oppression, and at the same time to organizing and training them for self-reliance activities, does it become a strongly felt and acted upon economic need.

But everywhere the multiple traditional and new roles of women prevent them from regular attendance and efficient learning. Women are overburdened with domestic tasks, cooking and cleaning, childrearing, cultivating and subsistence and income-earning activities. Just the fact of giving birth frequently leaves little time and energy for additional projects like literacy. It means frequent interruptions to attend to

children who are at home and when mothers bring their smallest children to literacy classes, their concentration on learning is weakened.

Women lack self-confidence and are relatively isolated from literate environments. Women learners often express their weak confidence in learning by blaming themselves for their learning difficulties, saying, for example, "my head is no good for learning" or "I like to study but nothing stays in my head." While more common among women, this attitude inculcated by colonialism is also widespread among male learners. However, many men benefit from having more contact outside of the rural home environment than women. Women, on the other hand, have little exposure to public communication and to other languages than their mother tongue. Many more men than women communicate in the official language due to patriarchal traditions of men being the "spokesmen" and women expected to stay silent in public, the mobility of men as compared to women's homebound isolation, and the fact that men more often than women have been to primary school for some time during their childhood. Even if women are strongly motivated to learn the official national language, learning literacy and a second language at the same time considerably complicates the process of literacy acquisition. Furthermore, the use of new literacy skills and hence literacy retention is severely limited by the lack of access to easy reading and writing materials. Almost all printed communication for public use in official languages is too complex in structure, vocabulary and presentation for a newly literate person. This is very discouraging to self-confidence and further efforts to learn.

Moreover, women are discouraged by the attitudes of men, often including the male teacher, towards their capacities in the classroom. Husbands and guardians often forbid women to take part in literacy classes. Men are afraid of the challenge to their power position within the family. Such challenges can lead men to violent reactions against women. Fear of husbands' or other males' violent reactions against women's independent activities, such as literacy, prevents women from participating in literacy and/or further training. This is a very important issue which needs more attention.

Teaching methods and attitudes play an essential role in literacy participation and sustaining participation among women in particular. The role of female teachers for female learners and the question whether separate female learning groups encourage learning and participation among women are important issues.

The Role of Political Mobilization and Community Support

Although the need to explain the relevance of literacy in pre-literacy mobilization campaigns is essential, it is more important to create a situation where the need for literacy is felt or where the use of literacy becomes evident, or to select areas for literacy where such a situation already exists in order to ensure sustained motivation and participation. The insertion of literacy activities into a process of social and political reform or other development-related efforts aiming at solving felt needs, encourages participation and motivation. In Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia, literacy was part of a national policy for overcoming poverty and injustice. Both the state and the citizens expected literacy to be one of many factors which would improve social, political and economic conditions and help develop human and material resources. "National commitment" or "political will" expressed through the state and/or popular movement, incorporating all sectors of the society, and the capacity to organize and mobilize the people and other resources for literacy, were crucial for high levels of participation of women and men. In such campaigns the teaching methods were traditional but the contents have been focussed on national issues, including equal rights and women's emancipation and equal participation in all spheres of society. But just as in other literacy strategies, the sustaining of literacy among women in particular proves difficult. In the post-campaign situation, just like in other contexts, women tend to be pushed out at a gradually increasing rate along the path through the process of literacy and post-literacy.

Literacy Linked to other "Development" Activities

Many literacy programs today are based on the concept of "fundamental education" that was promoted by UNESCO and other agencies from 1946-1964, and adopted to describe a broad field of development activities, including non-formal literacy programs. This concept became merged with the "community development" ideology that stressed that literacy must be used for some "practical" activity in order to produce development. More selective and economic-oriented literacy programs draw on the work-oriented "functional" approach, tried out by UNESCO in eleven countries from 1967 to 1972 to find ways of transforming literacy into an effective instrument for economic development.

The meaning of "functionality" was limited to improved vocational skills of a target group, mostly employed workers, in a specific economic activity. In many cases literacy was "functionalized" in terms of industry, mechanized agriculture, or skilled crafts, virtually excluding any female participation. Modern sector development in the Third World is heavily weighted towards men, and literacy, integrated into development programs, was also geared to men.

A more common approach today is government-promoted "general literacy" programs with fairly diverse objectives. They are often large-scale, "politically cool" programs that provide access to those who want literacy, and where illiteracy is not seen as an immediate, major obstacle to the economy. Women are often an important target group. The curriculum is usually oriented to subjects that the state is comfortable with – healthcare, nutrition and agriculture.

Studies of traditional "income generating" programs find that they are often not generating much income and that literacy is seldom made a priority. In many state-run, as well as NGO-sponsored programs, the philosophy is that literacy is not an aim in itself, and so literacy should be integrated into other meaningful activities. Literacy and numeracy become necessary tools for learning more, controlling money and participating in community activities. However, in this approach literacy instruction often becomes neglected, since the participating women are expected to be involved in so many activities at the same time. Women organized in many integrated projects neither manage to generate income nor to learn literacy skills.

Priorites have to be defined according to each context. BRAC in Bangladesh, as well as many women's organizations in India, has concluded that literacy is not a priority. It has been discovered there that women find literacy instruction meaningful only when projects that actually improve women's conditions have been going on successfully for some years and have raised awareness of the accompanying need for literacy. In other cases, for example in Latin America, women have been mobilised and recruited for the purpose of literacy but the lessons in practice have concentrated more on awareness and/or knowledge transfer about social and political conditions and agendas; the participants have felt deceived because they expected to learn to read, write and calculate.

Women's Literacy Motivation

Women literacy learners' responses to questions about motivation include the desire to help children to study; more self-reliance and control over personal life; liberation from isolation and absolute submission to received authority; and the wish to be actors in society in the same way as men. Several experiences, particularly in the context of social transformation and political mobilization for literacy and equality between women and men, show the importance for women of coming together to discuss common problems through literacy participation.

"Before we could hardly go out. As a young girl I was restricted to my home during several years. As married I had to wear my veil when I went out and that was not often. Now we have been let free. I am starting to get friends."

"We are learning to read and write. It is fine. But we also get together and talk. That is still better."

Concluding Comments

Social and political contexts determine how and when literacy programs are relevant for women. Illiterate women often want to become literate, but relatively few manage to satisfy this wish because the constraints are overwhelming. Projects involving women probably have a better chance to function well if they include a number of women with enough education to be able to cope with training in leadership, organization, management, planning, bookkeeping and marketing. Illiterate women ought to have a choice of either participating fully in proj-

ect activities or in literacy classes until they have attained literacy and numeracy skills. A rotation scheme would help overcome the problems of not generating income, literacy or any other tangible results. And a process of conscientization, like that in the popular education approach, is also crucial.

Special provisions and program designs are required, such as childcare during class time and intensive periods of instruction. The Burkina Faso Ministry of Rural Affairs, in an innovative approach, recruited over 13,000 women officials and members of women's groups, cooperatives, executive boards of female revolutionary committees as well as village midwives, to teach literacy in ten national languages in 470 centres. Literacy instruction took place at boarding centres during four phases of twelve days each, with weekly breaks during which participants could return home to their families. The campaign was successful in spite of problems created by possessive husbands, negative influences exerted by adversaries of female emancipation, as well as the exhausting demands of being a wife and mother. More than 40 percent of the learners were nursing mothers, so women had to bring others to look after the children brought to the centres. Food rations were often insufficient, but the level of learning was considered excellent.

In spite of well-justified warnings that traditional welfare approaches of basic non-formal education for women reproduce women's subordination rather than empowering or emancipating them, the importance of teaching women survival skills related to literacy as well as health and nutrition, must not be underestimated. Such training provides necessary tools for further empowering activities of awareness-raising and participation, as well as for struggles for equality and social justice.

Literacy is a necessary tool in this process, even if it does not solve fundamental development problems. We must pay great attention to women's particular needs and constraints in research and action. We must promote action research combined with the training of researchers, trainers, and instructors so that we might better understand female learners' specific situations.

Recently literate women on the south coast of Kenya explained the advantages of having learnt to read, write and calculate by referring to their new abilities to sign their names, to travel, control money transactions, read medical prescriptions and instructions, and their resulting feeling of pride and self-reliance. "Our eyes have been opened." *(Learners' Panel, International Task Force on Literacy meeting, April 1989)*

"With literacy, people don't earn more but everything they know is in their heads. They can go anywhere, do anything, ask things, enter in. When people don't know reading and writing, they are afraid." *(Interview with Cristina Mavale, factory worker in Maputo, in Marshall 1988)*

PHOTO MARGARET RANDALL

KHULUMANI MAKHOSIKAZI

WOMEN AND LITERACY
.....some South African women speak

In November 1988 COCAW (Congress of South African Writers) held a two-day conference on Women and Writing. They invited progressive literacy organizations to talk on the topic of Women and Literacy. To prepare for the conference, the English Literacy Project (ELP) ran a series of workshops with a group of women learners to explore the relationship of literacy and gender. We came to the understanding that what affects literacy learning has a lot more to do with racial and economic factors than gender factors.

What follows is a discussion of these workshops. But before we launch into this discussion we would like to describe ELP's work within a context of the extent of illiteracy in South Africa.

Literacy in South Africa

Nine million South Africans are illiterate. That is 9 million people over the age of 20 have had less than five years of formal schooling. The racial proportion of this number is significant.

- 47% of africans
- 27% of coloured
- 15% of asians and
- 2% of whites are classified as illiterate.

The racial disparity in these figures is predictable. They clearly reflect the priorities of an apartheid education system which promotes white education and neglects black education.

Workshopped by ELP Learners and Staff

Written by Dawn Norton and Carola Steinberg

Only 1% of all illiterate people are in literacy programs. Most of these are run by the state. However, there are some progressive literacy projects in the country whose literacy work is part of the struggle against apartheid.

The English Literacy Project

ELP offers a service to adults who have missed out on basic education. We work with trade unions to organize literacy classes at various workplaces. We produce basic English readers, workbooks and a newspaper for adults. We believe that literacy must work towards the empowerment of workers, so that they are informed and active in the democratic movement.

Since we do our work in a context of active feedback and interchange between ELP and learners and since our learners are mostly unionized workers, they have had a deeply politicising effect on our materials.

When ELP started off in 1983 our focus was on teaching English, reading and writing. We produced ESL workbooks and teacher training in South African images and content, but based on the British model of functional, skill-based English language learning. In 1986 we initiated a learners' committee with reps from each class.

It soon emerged that learners wanted more than English. They asked for general education, including current affairs, political topics and numeracy. So we started writing articles which provided people with information to discuss a variety of social and political issues of concern to them. Classes spent hours reading about and discussing the new Labour Law, wage increases, skin lightening creams, the history of the struggle, the state of emergency--the topics are endless. Discussions happen in people's own language or in broken English--the learning of English and literacy has been incorporated into understanding and challenging the changes that are happening in our society.

Exploring Literacy and Gender

Over the years, ELP staff often said it would be important to talk about women's issues in our classes. Occasionally a discussion on men/women relations would erupt in a class, but we never had the focus or energy to take it further. So we took it as a stimulus to action when COSAW invited ELP to present a paper on women and literacy.

ELP chose to workshop a play with a group of women learners who would perform at the conference. We did not want to "speak" on behalf of our learners. We thought that the learners in performance would "voice" the issues around their experience as women attending literacy classes.

We invited all ELP women learners to a Saturday workshop. Most of the women who came were from one workplace--a chicken factory where they are employed as unskilled labourers. At the end of the first workshop there had been a lot of discussion but no play and the group agreed to meet again to prepare the presentation for COSAW.

Attendance at the workshops fluctuated, generally decreasing. We remained optimistic that we could pull off a play. Yet at the final workshop, when the learners were to transform talking into performance, the ELP staff outnumbered the learners. So we changed plans and presented a paper to the conference on what we had learned from the women learners.

What follows is a description of the process ELP staff and learners went through to explore the theme of women and literacy and our analysis of the outcomes of the workshops.

The first part of the workshop dealt with women's attitudes to themselves and to men. As an icebreaker we discussed whether, if we had a choice, we would choose to be men or women?

Two thirds of the women "chose" to be women. They saw themselves as strong and competent and responsibie, particularly in the role of mother and breadwinner.

A third of the women said no, actually, they'd rather be men. They said that men care only for themselves, keep their pay packets to themselves and drink at the shebeen. The women wanted the irresponsibility that men can indulge in.

Later the learners agreed that although women work more than men and shoulder more responsibility, generally in this society, men had more power.

The next step in the workshop was to look at the factors which affect literacy learning.

The women had a variety of reasons for attending classes. There were functional goals: learn to help children with homework, read directions to get to meetings, operate bank machines, fill-in forms. There were personal goals: do things for myself, speak to managers at work and speak up for myself. There was economic necessity: educated people can get better jobs and better wages. And there were overall political aims: we want to understand things better.

The women's motivation to learn was very strong. When asked what helped them in their learning, they responded:

- We are determined.
- We want to overcome our oppression.
- There will be less chance to be intimidated.
- We want to learn things that only men used to learn.

And they all agreed with one learner who said:

In the past a woman got married and she had few worries because her husband looked after her and her children. But today, things are different. Today, women have to look after their children and after their husbands. And to do that, women need a good job in order to make money. And therefore women need a good education.

The Obstacles

But the obstacles they needed to overcome in their search for knowledge were formidable. We categorised these obstacles into three main factors:

First, *political and economic*. Some of the statements that the women made were:

- The government oppresses us blacks because they need people to do the dirty work.
- The government and management are not interested in education for adults like us.
- The government does not build enough schools for black school children.
- I worry in class because we have no money.
- I must do overtime work.

So the learners put blame (and quite rightly so) on the governments deliberate strategy of educational under-provision for black adults and children.

Second, *organizational and personal*. Women mentioned:

- There is no time off from work to attend classes.
- There's no transport after class.
- I miss classes because of many funerals.
- Other workers laugh at me when I go to class.
- My children laugh at me because I am too old to learn.
- The lessons are not interesting for me.
- Learning is difficult because I don't have enough education.

The learners agreed that all these factors affected both men and women. However they argued that attending classes was more difficult for women than men.

Then third, *gender factors*. Here the women made three main points:

- Too much work to do at home--too much cooking, cleaning, looking after children and doing everything.
- Husbands who get cross when supper is late, or are jealous and don't want their wives to attend literacy classes if they themselves are illiterate, or who think that their wives are seeing other men instead of attending class.
- Falling pregnant and looking after small children.

We looked at the problems specifically affecting women, and discussed ways of dealing with them. It was these very problems and possible solutions that we had wanted to develop into drama. But this line of thinking didn't get us very far. The women demanded work-time off for learning. But other than that, they spoke about doing more housework on the weekends or cooking the day before so that they had time for classes. Not once did any learner suggest that their husbands help around the house or cook or look after sick children. Ironically, the "solutions" presented by

the women required them doing even more work.

What did we at ELP learn?

We learned that learners are far more conscientised around issues of race and class than around gender.

The sorts of things that women talked about in relation to their learning had more to do with living in South Africa, than about being women per se. Racial discrimination and poverty are more immediate daily experiences of injustice than sexual inequalities.

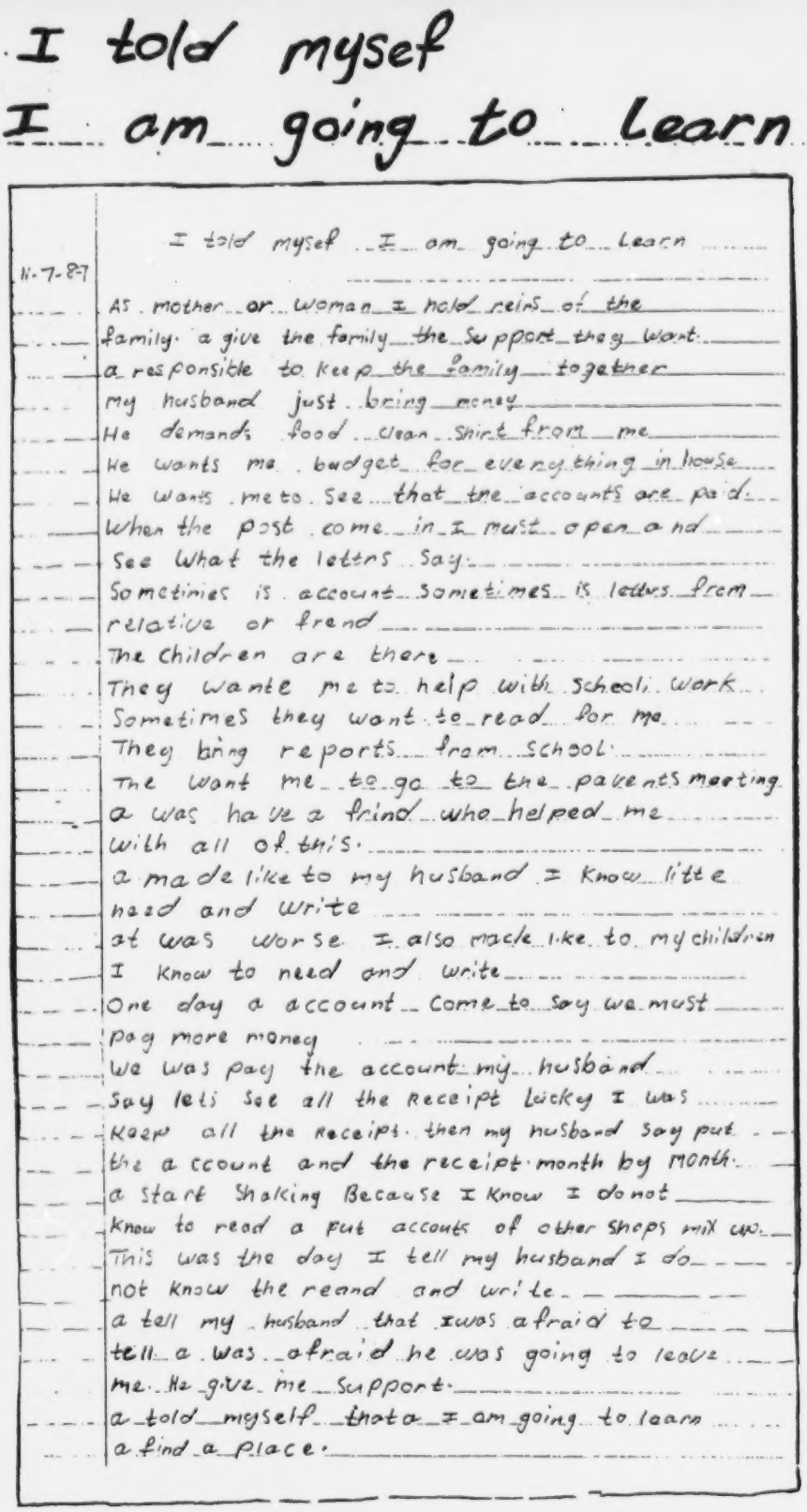
We learned that gender roles are clearly defined and unchallenged.

The issue which affected only women and not men was domestic work. This restricted their time commitments to literacy classes. The women's "solution" to make time to attend the classes, ironically meant extra work in the home. They did not consider including men in domestic work. Gender roles were perceived to be a "given" and part of the "natural order" of things. Thus domestic burdens and the double load that women endure--of work at the work place and work at home--go unchallenged.

We learned that our entry point into gender issues should have been around immediate, concrete concerns.

These could be issues that have already been mentioned in classes: lobola payments, contraception, child care or sexual harassment. Through discussion around these issues, learners could overcome the traditional problem of women seeing their experience as purely personal and from there develop an analysis of gender and the different power relations between men and women. Then maybe women would feel they had a right to challenge men's lack of domestic assistance or men's attitudes to their attending class.

"Women and Learning" was too abstract. It was a typical case of us imposing an issue rather than responding to what organically arises from the classes. The question now for us is whether initiating discussion around gender in order to develop a feminist analysis of learner's lives when the issues haven't emerged from the learners themselves is a leftist form of political propaganda or cultural imposition?



I told myself
I am going to Learn

11-7-87

I told myself I am going to Learn

AS mother or woman I hold reins of the
family. a give the family the support they want.
a responsible to keep the family together
my husband just bring money
He demands food clean shirt from me
He wants me budget for every thing in house
He wants me to see that the accounts are paid
When the post come in I must open and
See What the letters say:
Sometimes is account sometimes is letters from
relative or frend
The children are there
They wante me to help with school work
Sometimes they want to read for me
They bring reports from school
The want me to go to the parents meeting
a was have a frind who helped me
with all of this.
a made like to my husband I know litte
need and write
at was worse I also made like to my children
I know to need and write
One day a account come to say we must
pay more money
We was pay the account my husband
Say lets see all the receipt lucky I was
Keep all the receipts then my husband say put
the account and the receipt month by month
a start Shaking Because I know I do not
know to read a put accounts of other shops mix up
This was the day I tell my husband I do
not know the reand and write
a tell my husband that I was afraid to
tell a was afraid he was going to leave
me. He give me support.
a told myself that a I am going to learn
a find a place.

But now my husband start complain.
He complain that the days I go to my class
I come late the food is not ready in tim
a keep silent and say myself
a am not going to give him chance
I have frustrate myself long
By giving away I know to read and write
One day we attend the meeting for
my learn a come home lat ther was
no food He fight me for the food
I say why not coock yourself
you have hands. He kick me.
next time. I come late again
This time was from class.
a was afraid I was shaking.
He Sa to me I am goinging to
stop this biseness of learning.
He take my books and throcw
them I away. out of the door
a go out and pick them and say
yo do this again. a pack my clothes
and go away. you coock and wash
for the Children He look at me
He keep silent and go to the bedroom
And I know I have win
Elizabeth ndaba

In Conclusion

The workshops confirmed for us that women's issues are tangential to literacy classes. People come to literacy for functional, coping skills as well as for political information. Certainly women's issues come into that, but they are unlikely to be central.

ELP also realized that we don't yet have clarity on how to focus discussion of women's issues in literacy classes. Yes, there is FEDTRAW (Federation of South African Women) and there are strong women's voices in COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions). What ELP needs to do is take the discussions that are happening in those organizations and link with the needs of literacy learners. Only then can we create materials at a basic English level that would provide information and a starting point for women's issues.

We are part of a society that is caught up in national and economic liberation as the highest priorities. Women's issues will only become important in literacy classes once they have become important in the national arena of political organizations and unions.

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TOMORROW WILL BE DIFFERENT: A Literacy Course for Women

An experience from Santiago, Chile

***Tomorrow Will Be Different* is a gift for Spanish-speaking women, who struggle endlessly all over the world to raise the level of women's literacy. It is a manual for women's empowerment by women and as such it is one more force for the women's global movement, that wants urgently to rebuild this planet before it is destroyed by the patriarchs.**

This is a work that broadens horizons and shatters the barriers to women's literacy and education, questioning, analyzing and reflecting on the society, from a women's perspective. It offers alternative ways, which can be created by women to improve their lives and transform a future for all the people, at the same time that they learn to read and write. Its precise methodology and clear instructions makes this book an invaluable tool for women popular educators.

In the International Literacy Year, this book gives us a seed to grow in the field of alternative education and of women's literacy by women.
(from the Prologue, by Carolyn Lehman)

This manual is the product of a growing understanding of the meaning of being a woman in a patriarchal world. We have lived for years near the women in the marginalized areas of Santiago; their life has taught us, even more clearly, the nature of domination and the true courage to confront it. With them, we have felt the effects of marginalization; with them we have experienced the helplessness and fear in the face of institutionalized violence; we have cried with them when they told us of their horror of being raped or battered, and we have struggled with them to be treated with dignity.

excerpted from a book by Peggy Moran and Monica Hingston

In a society that allows and promotes such oppression of women, the illiterate women is the one who is more oppressed. For that reason we decided to develop this literacy program, which contains a consciousness raising process that will help women to reflect on their reality, to develop a critical conscience and to take a more active role in the transformation of society.

The motivation to make this literacy course originated in 1986 when some women participating in Casa Sofía's (a centre for *pobladoras* – women in the marginalized areas) groups did not know to read and write. They told us how embarrassed and isolated they felt because they could not fully participate in the groups and other activities. It was a particular oppression, among other oppressions. They asked us to teach them.

We wanted to respond to their request but not with just any literacy program, but with one made from a women's perspective. We found one partially developed by two Chilean women. Based on what they had done we developed a methodology.

In August 1986, eleven women began the program, their courage moved us as did their persistence, desire and efforts. Their stories are similar to those of many, many oppressed and marginalized women, living in a country tormented by 14 years of military dictatorship, where the effects of unemployment, hunger, illness, persecution, threats and deaths doubly affect women living in poverty.

They came embarrassed for not being able to read at their age and with the fear of maybe not being able to learn. They were between 26 and 56 years of age. No one had more than three years of school; many had never used a pencil. Some had been victims of abuse in their childhood; one of them was deaf as a result of a beating suffered from her partner, another one lived with her alcoholic step-father, others had been humiliated by their teachers and some had been pulled out of school, or simply never went to school in order to care for their younger siblings or work. All these contributed to a great sense of insecurity, as well as the daily concerns for surviving, the difficulties of being able to study at home, the situation in the country, which were obstacles difficult to overcome.

In spite of so many barriers, they grew as women, they acquired new perspectives and they advanced in their ability to read and write. There was a rich exchange that boosted the development of a critical consciousness. The generative words in the methodology were taken from the reality and experience of the Chilean women.

We lived exceptional moments. There were disappointments and successes, cries and laughs. We did relaxation exercises to reduce stress. We shared personal stories and we grew in our love, appreciation and friendship to each other. One very cold morning a woman arrived with bread she had cooked herself, and without saying anything, she cut it and gave us each a piece. Bread and roses ...

Nine of the eleven women completed the four months receiving a certificate in a ceremony. Three of them kept meeting during 1987, once a week to work on reading units.

After evaluating the pilot program used in 1986, we saw the need of promoting literacy amongst more *pobladoras* and of multiplying groups and locations. In 1987 we decided to create a new program. The methodology is based on Paulo Freire's and it is detailed enough to allow its use by women willing to work in the literacy field.

We have chosen to create the program for women and from their perspective because women are, amongst the poor and oppressed, the most abandoned, oppressed and isolated. We hope that, if this work multiplies, for many women and for the whole world, tomorrow will be different.
(from the Introduction)

The manual details 17 lessons around themes and generatives words. Tomorrow will be Different *is available by writing Monica Hingston, Correo Central Casilla 52414, Santiago Chile.*

KEEPING THE CIRCLE STRONG

Native Women's Resource Centre, Toronto, Canada

NWRC, CANADA

Over the last few years Native women in Canada have increased their organizing strength and visibility in both the Native and women's movement. They've fought as part of these movements as well as confronted the discrimination and silencing they continue to face within them. Women in cities and Native communities in every province across the country have worked to support struggles for self-determination, they have been at the forefront of battles for improved housing and health care, to stop "kidnapping" by state officials of Native children from their home communities and against continuing police harassment. Native women have taken difficult stands against violence, even where this might threaten to "divide"; they have also challenged the women's movement to address its racism and exclusion of Native women.

The Native Women's Resource Centre is unique, the only one of its kind in Canada geared to the special needs and concerns of Native Women in Toronto. Lynda Yanz talked with two workers from the literacy program about the Centre.

Carrie Tabobondung: I come from a reserve called Parry Island, and after I finished high school I went to the University of Regina to the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College to start my Indian social work degree. After a year, I went back to the reserve and then came here to look for a job. When I first started the job I didn't really know much about literacy. I knew the problem was there, but I didn't know what to do. I've gradually found out, but am still learning a lot.

Donna Marshall: I worked at the Department of Indian Affairs, so needless to say I soon needed a different job. It was really hard at first. Carrie had just started too. But once you get going, and keep your ears open you start to grasp. Then when I started reading the stuff it was like, no kidding, as if we didn't know this before.

***Lynda Yanz**: What do you do here at the Centre?*

Carrie: The Native Women's Resource Centre provides short term, emergency services as well as longer term support. Services include assistance with welfare, housing, employment, literacy, referral, job search, day care, food, clothing, household items and support of women who are being abused. Many of the women who use the Centre are in transition, either from reserve to city or from city to city. We also organize other activities such as the women's circle which is a monthly support group and weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. The family worker provides one-to-one counselling.

Donna: Housing is a big problem in Toronto. And when you look at where we live within the city, it's mostly in areas where there are low rental housing projects. Native people move around a lot and housing's always a problem, made worse by the high cost of living in Toronto. So at the Centre we try to help. We also have a food bank. We give out food when people come by, to help tide them over and loan out bus tokens so people can get around.

Those are the people our literacy program wants to reach. A lot of our learners last year came from Pedoban Lodge, a Native alcohol treatment centre. So many of our learners were from there we ended up getting involved in a lot of different activities and issues.

PHOTO Liza McCoy

***Lynda**: Why a Native* women's *resource centre?*

Donna: A lot of the Native organizations focus on "families" which includes women naturally, but what happens is that they are organized by men. You have lots of situations where there are no women on the boards. How can they address a woman's needs without any women? That's part of the problem. The other really obvious problem is the society we live in: it's a white middle-class society. Native women come from a different history and culture and the result is that we really get the short end of the stick. Not only do we have to deal with sexist discrimination but also racism. Being a Native woman myself I've felt . . . I've come to a lot of dead ends in my life. So why a Native women's resource centre? Maybe because it's important just to be letting Native women know that they're not the only ones out there. They're not the only ones. There is a collective of women they can count on, and through that more and more Native women's issues are being voiced.

The NWRC is based on our belief in the traditional teachings of the Elders. We believe these teachings are essential to the continued survival of Indigenous people.

We also believe in the ability of Native Women to Initiate, Manage and Provide our own service.

We now believe all Native Women have unique qualities and knowledge to share with others based on individual experiences.

Carrie: The Centre got started by a group of Native women who got together to discuss their concerns about the quality and use of services already being provided in Toronto. The problem was that there was nothing specifically for Native women. The Centre opened months later in October 1985.

Donna: Now there's a lot more women using the Centre and our program is getting better known which means there's more demand. But we continue to have a problem with money and staff. We have no core funding. When you have such a high turnover of staff it creates stress for the rest of the staff who are left, and probably most for the administrator. There is such a high turnover of staff and board. To me that's really tragic. There's no foundation.

Carrie: I think a lot of the turnover is because of the different government programs we're forced to hire people on.

Donna: It's oppressive to have someone working under those programs and know that she's not going to be working for that long, that the program's going to end and she's going to go right back to where she was. We have two workers on a provincial government program. What happens to them when the time's up? Where do we get money to keep them on?

***Lynda**: What about the Literacy Program?*

Carrie: The program started in 1987 because the Board saw literacy as an educational tool for Native women. Education is one specific need that we found was apparent in the Native community. Many people may already know how to read and write but it's important to extend those skills, and build self-esteem.

NWRC, CANADA

Donna: This past year we've had about 35 learners. Some of them have finished, have reached their goals; others haven't. I wouldn't say it was half and half, maybe a quarter didn't reach the goals that they set out.

Carrie: The program is learner centered, based on the learner's needs and interests. A learner coming into the program is matched with a volunteer tutor. We coordinate their first meeting and make sure everything is going smooth in the match. Tutors report back monthly to the coordinator on how things are going. Sometimes it doesn't work, so we try to get another tutor for the learner. It happens sometimes; everything's not perfect.

***Lynda**: What training do tutors get?*

Carrie: We haven't done much training in this last year because we still had enough trained tutors. We're planning to have a training session for all the tutors. It will cover the basics of assessing learners, tips on how to teach, ideas about activities. And we teach them about the learners--what to expect, like low self-esteem and how they might feel about themselves. We also talk about the Native culture, how important it is. We want them to understand that the way Native people learn is different from non-Natives.

At this point a lot of our tutors are non-Native, so in the tutor training we talk about Native culture, and the education system--how it started and how Native people got involved, how they were forced into the residential system and the effect that has had on us. [Native children were systematically separated from their families and home communities to attend federal government residential schools often thousands of miles away from home.] We stress that tutors need to be able to understand where we're coming from.

Donna: We try to broaden their horizon and make the tutors aware of the way we feel. It's like we're the start of a clean-up generation. It's really hard. We're not going to accomplish all that we want our literacy program to do, but we're hoping to start something. We're talking generations of work here, because there have been generations of a plight that has been oppressing our people.

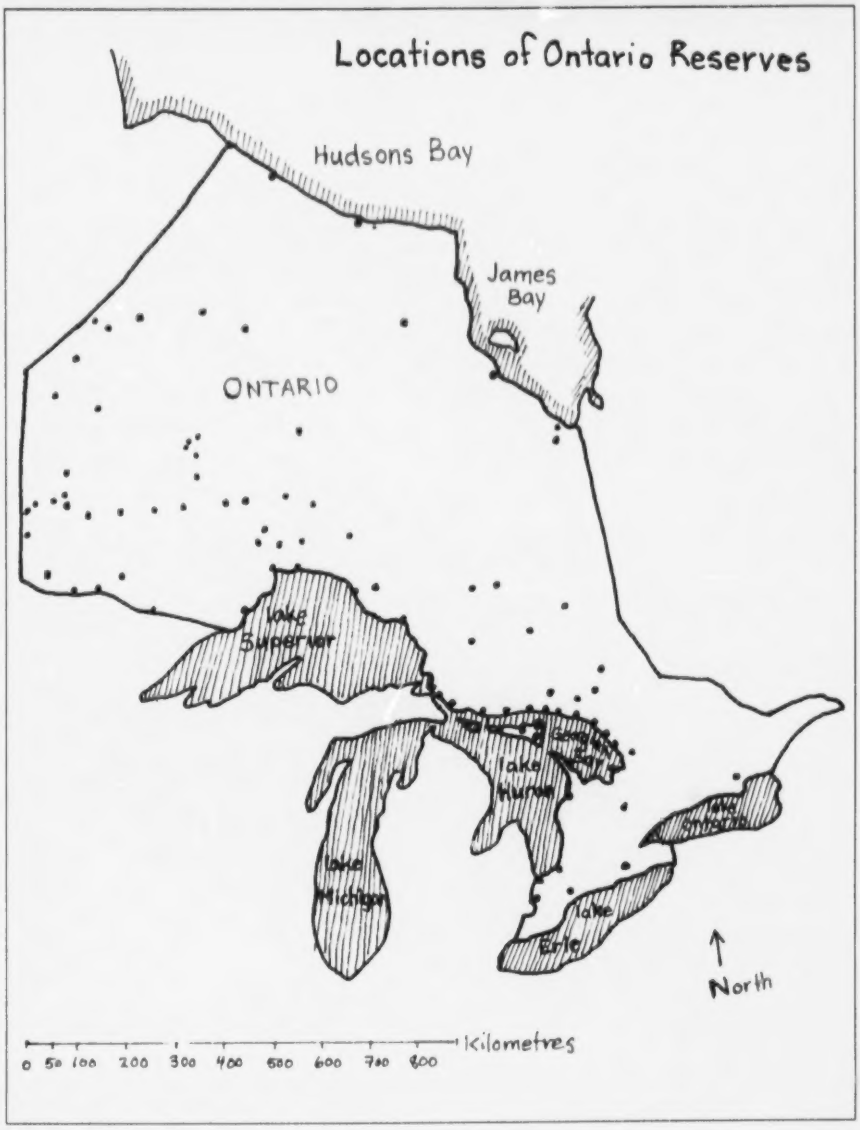
Plus you're dealing with a lot of angry and frustrated people. And that hinders their learning capabilities. Sometimes they're not willing to keep going. You've got to look at it from a holistic point of view. We're not just looking at the difference between the way Native and white children are educated. We're about changing the education system altogether, changing the whole approach to learning and teaching. And we think everyone has a lot to learn from what we're doing.

In the education system you are taught do's and don'ts and shoulds. You don't experience things, you're taught based on somebody else's opinion. So it can be that opinion is forced on you, and it can become confusing as you go from teacher to teacher, from grade to grade. In the older days Native people basically taught their children through experience and they wouldn't have to ask "why", you wouldn't have to explain "because". Instead you learn about how it is in the experience.

For example, when I was younger I had problems with reading. Now I'm a good reader but I didn't get good marks and I couldn't understand that. I think that was due to my shyness, and it showed when I had to read aloud in class, which is how your reading marks are set. So I got penalized. That's not really fair.

Carrie: The business of having report cards and being evaluated by white people . . . that's how Native people start to feel inferior to the teachers, like they're not on the same level, the teachers are up there and you're down here. We were never taught that way to begin with; we were always taught by living and seeing rather than memorizing.

Donna: We feel like we've been robbed by the education system. Besides how we're treated there is the fact that you don't learn about Native people. And in history all you learn is the textbook "Indian." We massacred; they conquered. I hated going to my history classes. I still don't have any use for history that is not written by our people. It is still based on an attitude of a different race and colour, an attitude of superiority. Our children still go to school and read about drunken Indians. There's nothing about Native lives and cultures.



***Lynda**: The scope of the Program seems a lot broader than "literacy" as simply reading and writing.*

Carrie: It varies so much. Learners are at different levels. You can have a basic learner that has only had Grade 5, and then you get other people in the program who are older and have finished high school or Grade 10. They may have kept a lot of those skills yet want to improve on them. Besides the formal stuff, we also do the in-staff work, proof-reading letters and reports. Some of the staff also need to improve on their writing and speaking skills. We can provide workshops to help improve on this.

In the future we're hoping to do more group work with the learners. We're looking into mother-tongue literacy in Ojibway or Cree although you find a lot of Iroquis and Mohawk as well from Chaanganaway and Six Nations reserves which are quite close. Toronto is the gathering place of a lot of different Native nations.

Donna: The problem is that the Ministry, where we get our funds from, doesn't recognize Native languages as legitimate second or first languages. It's just English and French. So we wouldn't be able to get funds for this. We're trying to find other funding sources but are planning to just start it anyway. You can't wait around for the government to recognize Native languages as legitimate for literacy.

We also feel it's important to have a program that allows people to learn about

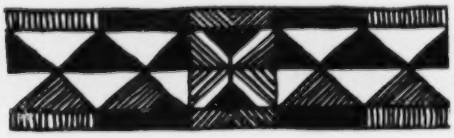
what's going on in the world. We've started a small library where a lot of the materials are by Native people. I've just started to set up a filing system where we've set up files on "world," "First Nations" and "women's" issues, things like that. People want to find out what's really happening; they want to be educated, not in a fantasy way, but in terms of reality. I know myself that's where I'd want to start.

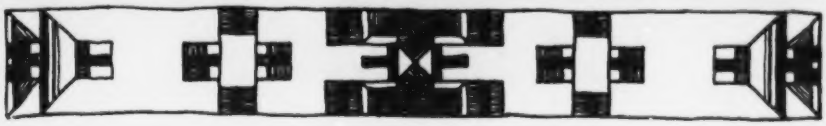
Carrie: We're also trying to develop our own curriculum for our learners and for learners in other programs. The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition is an umbrella organization for all the Ontario Native Programs and a lot of their concerns are dealing with curriculum and educating the public on Native literacy issues.

Donna: I'd like to see our literacy program as a kind of model for white learners as well. Where they would say "oh, we like this way of learning." We're trying to change the education system altogether, to change the whole approach to learning and teaching. We think everyone has a lot to learn from what we're doing.

Carrie: And hopefully other people will use our approach.

Donna: But recognize it as a Native approach.



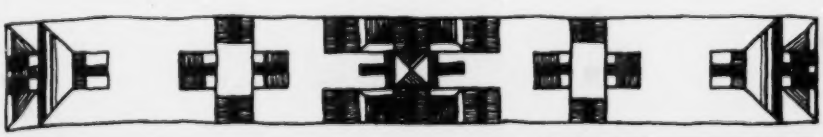


I Walk in the History of my People

by Chrystos*

There are women locked in my joints
for refusing to speak to the police
My red blood full of those
arrested in flight shot
My tendons stretched brittle with anger
do not look like white roots of peace
In my marrow are hungry faces
who live on land the whites don't want
In my marrow women who walk 5 miles every day for water
In my marrow the swollen hands of my people who are not allowed
to hunt
to move
to be
In the scars of my knees you can see
children torn from their families
bludgeoned into government schools
You can see through the pins in my bones
that we are prisoners of a long war
My knee is so badly wounded no one will look at it
The pus of the past oozes from every pore
This infection has gone on for at least 300 years
Our sacred beliefs have been made into pencils
names of cities gas stations
My knee is wounded so badly that I limp constantly
Anger is my crutch I hold myself upright with it
My knee is wounded
see
How I Am Still Walking

(from *Not Vanishing* published by Press Gang, Vancouver, 1988)



On the Training of Tutors for Women's Literacy:

A Woman's Experience with Women in Greece

"I have worked in Greece as a tutor in the program for illiterate women who lived in a depressed urban area of Athens. Within the framework of this program I have developed experimental teaching material. I am sending you an article about this experience with the hope that it may be useful to others."

For the implementation of an adult literacy program undertaken in 1984 by the General Secretariat for Popular Education there were two basic requirements: the development of suitable teaching material, and the instruction of tutors in matters relating to educational theory and teaching methods.

Within the framework of this program I undertook the development of experimental teaching material for use with adult illiterate women, while working as a tutor in a class of illiterate women that functioned in a depressed urban area of Athens for one school year. The development of the teaching material was based on the study of the educational theory and teaching method of Paulo Freire, and on teaching in the literacy class.

I believe that this combination of theory and practical classroom experience constitutes the correct method for the production of teaching materials for adult illiteracy. A fundamental component of the training must be the analysis of the method used in the production of teaching materials so that the tutor is able to adapt the available material or produce new material according to the needs and interests of the illiterate women.

by Danae Vaikoosi

Training Tutors for Women's Literacy

In May 1986, about eighty educators, most of them school teachers, took part in four five-day seminars arranged by the General Secretariat of Popular Education. During these seminars photocopies of the teaching material were distributed and discussed with the tutors along with other matters relating to the teaching of literacy.

The problems that arose for tutors during these training seminars were:

(a) The majority of the school-teachers taking part thought that primary school books were most suitable for women illiterates, believing at the same time that literacy is simply the mechanical acquisition of the ability to read and write. They also believed that discussion with the learners in an adult literacy class was a waste of time; they ignored the fact that through the discussions they would be able to pinpoint the needs of the learners, to cultivate the capacity of the learners to express themselves, to find starting-points for the lessons, to develop their own teaching material, and to create a pleasant and familiar environment during the lessons.

(b) The view that there should be different teaching material adapted to different groups' needs and interests was not easily understood or accepted. Extensive discussion of the need to modify the teaching material to suit the needs and interests of a given literacy class and to connect it to current affairs also proved necessary. Not all the participants were convinced of it.

(c) Participants asked many questions of this sort: "How many times a week will the class be held?", "How much material should be covered?", "Will the material be repeated?" and so on. It was evident that their experience of school-teaching made them want a detailed program which would lay down exactly what was to be taught and the time limits within which it should be covered.

(d) The majority of the teachers were ignorant of teaching and educational methods appropriate to adults. Many of the participants clung to schoolteaching methods which are suitable only for primary school children.

(e) Many of the teachers failed to appreciate the significance of some of the special problems that one often meets in an adult literacy class, for example:

- each of the students in a literacy class is at a different level, depending on what kind of work he or she does, what interests he or she has and how many attempts he or she has made alone to learn to read and write. For the tutor this means that teaching must be carried out on an individual basis.
- the illiterate usually have little self-confidence regarding their ability to learn to read and write. They need constant encouragement from the tutor who must stress their capacity to do a whole range of other things successfully.
- those who attend a literacy class have everyday obligations and responsibilities and come, consequently, to the lesson after a tiring day. It is natural therefore for their performance to be somewhat reduced and for them to want the lesson to be lively, interesting and pleasant, to relate to their needs and to give them some immediate sense of satisfaction, such as through learning to write their address or to read an advertisement in a newspaper. It was necessary, then, to keep pointing out the need for a positive "atmosphere"' to exist during the course of literacy classes.

My second experience of training tutors of women's literacy was connected with my work in the educational program of a non-state agency, KEMEA (Centre for Study and Self-Education).

KEMEA organised a one-year training program. The participants included unem-

ployed youths and graduates under twenty-five years of age. On completion of their course, one group of participants was to work in various special environments such as prisons, psychiatric clinics or - in collaboration with youth centres and women's organizations - in literacy classes for young people and women.

Before their training in women's literacy, the group of participants had attended seminars on sociology and education. During the training period the problems I mentioned earlier relating to the reproduction of school practices did not arise; there were no teachers among the participants. On the contrary, starting with their own memories of school, the participants recognised and accepted the need for a different educational process in adult literacy classes both with regard to teaching methods and teaching material. What appeared to be the basic problem was the excessive weight they attached to the significance of a dialogue during the course of the lesson - which turned into a fetish and a touch-stone for every problem - at the expense of teaching and the necessary teaching techniques.

They became absorbed in theoretical inquiries and issues and were often uninterested in teaching methods, which of course are essential for the teaching of reading and writing. In contrast with the schoolteacher trainees, with whom there was the danger of their turning literacy into an arid technique, the trainees with no teaching experience were in danger of getting lost in endless discussions.

Some proposals

On the basis of my experience in training tutors I am submitting for discussion these proposals:

(a) The training of tutors must combine theoretical knowledge and teaching practice.

(b) The education experiences and interests of the trainees must be taken into consideration as well as the particular problems which arise on each occasion.

(c) The participant trainees must be made sensitive to the special problems faced by the illiterate women.

(d) The training of tutors must take place in an atmosphere comparable to the atmosphere that they, as tutors, will have to create in the literacy classes.

EXCUSE ME . . .
BUT YOUR VOICE IS RISING!

(a request for contributions)

Voices Rising is published twice, soon to be three times per year (January, June, October) in English, French and Spanish. We welcome and need your contributions. Why not think about sending us:

✎ Informally written profiles (500 to 750 words) of your organization or work, including your constituencies, approach, difficulties you confront, successes, lessons learned, broader social and political context or any other relevant information.

✎ Articles (1000 to 2000 words) that detail and analyze issues or themes in women's education work - theoretical reflections on the practical.

✎ Materials your organization has published, or materials you have found interesting and useful in your work for annotation or review. These can be English, French or Spanish books, magazines, reports, or bibliographies.

✎ Reviews (500 to 1000 words) of publications you've found useful. (Or let us know if we can call on you to write a review for an upcoming issue.)

✎ Letters briefly telling us what you are up to, what you might need from others in the network, criticisms, questions, disagreements, new ideas. Informally written, of course.

✎ Announcements and Calls to Action

If you want more detail or would like to explore an idea for an article please write to us attention *Voices Rising*. Deadlines for the next issues are April and August 1990.

EXPANDING THE "GENERATIVE WORD" PROCESS: Women's Iron Will, Haiti

This article was previously published under the title "Women's Literacy project in Haiti" in *Adult Education and Development 31*, 1988:25-34, a half- yearly journal published by the German Adult Education Association. The article is a shortened version of the original, which is in German. Anyone interested in more background information or a copy of the article, write to Beate at her address below.

The literacy project in Haiti was carried out over a period of two years (1986-1988) with three groups (rural and urban), each with approximately 15 participants. The project was conceived and carried out by a group of ten Haitian women. While the preparation was carried out by one group without any financial assistance, the execution and evaluation (14 months) was financed by a Dutch organization that has supported various projects in Haiti. Beate Schmidt was coordinator and educational advisor.

Aims of the project were:

1) To provide reading, writing and arithmetical material related to the everyday life and the specific problems of the women participating.

2) To give women the opportunity to get to know each other, to discuss their problems, to organize themselves and to plan long-term joint activities.

3) To support women interested in planning suitable income-yielding activities through the establishment of a fund from which revolving credit at low interest could be made available.

by Beate Schmidt

Selection of the target groups

Three target groups were planned for participation in the project in order to collect sufficient data to facilitate a comparison between the groups. At the start of the project there were two groups in Port-au-Prince and one group in the country, about five hours drive away. All groups arose through personal contact; the women were eager to learn to read and write, so that no motivation work was necessary. A further, significant selection criterion was the more or less homogenous structure of the group in relation to their economic activities. This meant that eventual joint activities would be easier.

The women in one group were market women who sold mainly food items. None of them had an income exceeding US$30 a month. The women in the second group were, with one exception, unemployed. All had attended school for one year but had left because their parents were no longer able to pay the fees. Motivation for participation in a literacy course varied. One frequently mentioned reason was not having to be ashamed any more at not being able to read and thus being taken for ignorant.

Outline of a provisional learning program

The literacy program was directed, as far as possible, at the interests of the participants. The following steps were taken in the initial meetings with the women, questions regarding organization were clarified and the project introduced. The tutors took down an exact account of the women's situation in order to gain insight into their problems. These general discussions on their situation as women were recorded, evaluated according to linguistic criteria and classified thematically. Apart from this, the women were given a preliminary test to determine their reading and writing abilities. In these classes an initial introduction to reading and writing vowels took place. The actual program was then prepared on a weekly basis so that the week's evaluation could be taken into consideration in the planning of the next cless. All the classes were recorded so that the wealth of information resulting from the discussions could be evaluated afterwards. In this way, certain themes could be dealt with in more depth and persistent problems connected with individual sounds or letters attended to more systematically.

The program consisted of three phases:

1) The aim of the first phase was to be able to read and write all vowels and consonants and to form simple words and sentences with them.

2) The aim of the second phase was to read and write words and sentences containing combined consonants as, for example, in *gwoses* (pregnancy) or *legliz* (church).

3) In the third phase emphasis was placed on writing stories and the practical application of skills in everyday life.

We also planned to teach basic calculation skills by way of practical activities, such as calculating revenue and expenditure for the organization of a party.

In the first informal talks with the women, three main themes crystallized. They related to their work, reproduction, and participation. Sub-themes were compiled which together made up the program. Each theme was introduced by way of a generative word within a sentence.

Work: The participants analyze their working situation. They draw up an exact time-study to provide information on activities which are the most time-consuming and where eventual changes can be made. We ask, "Can the introduction of suitable technology be a first step in reducing the workload of women?" We study the causes for women's double and treble workload and the significance of the organization for realizing their own interests.

Respect and self-respect: Although women in Haiti play an important role in society and the economy, the predominant image of women - easily recognizable from Haitian proverbs - is negative. The women analyze what effect this negative attitude towards women has on their own view of themselves and how they can overcome the consequences. Leading Haitian women and their struggle for equality are discussed.

Reproduction: This comprises all themes concerning relationships sexuality, pregnancy, birth and so on. The women have the opportunity to get to know their bodies better in order to have more control over family planning. The important role of women in health care is discussed as well as the problem of women being superseded in this practice by modern medicine.

Participation: We discuss women's participation in decision making processes at all levels of society. Balance of power and the rights of women are analyzed. Women form their own ideas on development and draw up strategies for putting them into practice.

"Work" Examples:

Content	Word
The life of a woman	*lavi* (life)
The inferiority of female work, underpaid or not paid at all, double and treble workload of women.	*beseleve* (to bend, to lift)
The tools which women use for their work.	*zouti* (tool)

"Respect and Self-Respect" Examples:

Content	Word
The woman as pillar of the family.	*potomitan* (pillar)
Image of women in society.	*fanm vanyan*
International Women's Day.	*uit mas*

"Reproduction" Examples:

Content	Word
Relationship between man and woman.	*fezafe* (relationship)
Violence towards women.	*kenbe* (to rape)
Menstruation and pregnancy.	*gwoses* (pregnancy)
Contraception and abortion.	*dilatasyon* (abortion)

"Participation" Examples:

Content	Word
Division of power between women and men.	*pouvwa* (power)
What laws can women appeal to?	*lalwa* (law)
Forms of organization for putting development into practice.	*tetansanm* (together)

Evaluation of the project

The participating groups differed considerably with respect to interest, cooperation, dynamics and attendance. A feature shared by all women was the iron will to learn to read and write and the subsequent hope that their problems would then be solved. At the beginning of the project, their interests were very individual; each person wanted to gain the most personal profit from the course. During the classes a feeling of trust emerged and the readiness to try something out together; perhaps due to the insight that it is easier to seek a solution to problems together.

The ideal occasion for the first joint "test of courage" was International Women's Day. Many national organizations arranged events and, thanks to the intensive publicity work of many newly established women's groups, practically the whole population was informed about it.

Two of the project groups became involved in festivities. The Port-au-Prince group wrote a small play entitled *Tetansanm* (Together). It was about a woman who encouraged fellow women to join her in opening up a small business with their collective capital. The business runs well, the women make a small profit and they leave the stage dancing and singing. This five-minute play was greeted enthusiastically by the audience. The group of rural women organized a lovely festival for their village and visitors from surrounding districts. They had learnt dances and written plays and poems about the situation of rural women.

On the day before the festival the school director refused to let them have the hall that he had previously promised them. The women were not prepared, however, to be robbed of their festival, and without a moment's hesitation they stormed the school building and forced the director to hand over the key. The festival was a great success. In both groups these experiences helped to build up the self-confidence of the women.

Although more attention has been given to problems surrounding literacy work with women in recent times, there is still a lack of initiative aimed at changing women's situations. The initiative should be grasped and developed by women themselves so that they have their development in their own hands.

The concept introduced here is coupled with the hope that reading and writing skills will be used as a tool in securing a dignified human existence for women and thus for all people. Such a tool, however, can only function in a context where the social and political conditions linked to the well-being of everyone, exist.

I am very interested in contacting women working on the development of literacy materials geared towards women's needs for an exchange of information and experiences.

Beate Schmidt.
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West Germany

PUBLISHING WOMEN'S STORIES

Parkdale Project Read, Toronto, Canada

Janet Ryan has been a learner at Parkdale Project Read in Toronto, Canada and works to get other people involved in literacy programs. She is currently editing a book that she wrote and preparing it for publication. *She's Speaking Out* is about Janet's life and the difficulties she has encountered in not being able to read and write. The book will be published by Parkdale Project Read in early 1990.

I didn't give up yet. I still went looking for a job. I found a job making soap. Two months later, I got laid off because there was no work. I went to the unemployment office and I looked on the board and I couldn't read what was on the board. I went home and cried and my Mom said, "What happened?"

"I can't find a job and when I ask for help they say 'what do you need help with to find a job?' I tell the people at the unemployment office I can't read the job board. They say the they don't have the time to help me read the job board and that makes me feel bad and sad that there was nothing there for me."

❖ ❖ ❖

I moved into High Park and that's where my new life began. I was just doing my laundry one day and that's where I saw the number for a literacy program.

❖ ❖ ❖

I started a literacy program in Parkdale at the Parkdale Public Library on Queen Street West. The staff were good to me and it was a new beginning and a new life for me. I really enjoy learning to read and write.

❖ ❖ ❖

And I got involved in planning International Literacy Day. And it was a lot of fun and a lot of work and I learned a lot of new ways to help other people get into literacy programs.

Excerpt from *She's Speaking Out: What is it like to be Illiterate?* by Janet Ryan.

Betsy Trumpener works at Parkdale Project Read and is helping Janet with her book.

Betsy: *How did you get started writing your story?*

Janet: One of the staff at Parkdale Project Read asked me. I would probably never have thought to do it myself. I just wrote down things that had happened in my life. The people at Parkdale said, "Don't worry about the spelling, we can go back and change things later." It took me about a year to write a book. I just wrote a bit every week. When I had it all written, I worked with tutors. I just made a few changes, adding a few things and correcting the spelling. I made a list of some learners, staff, and tutors, in the program. I had them read it and offer suggestions.

Betsy: *Do you think being a woman has affected the way that you write?*

Janet: I think men don't put their feelings in as much as woman do, so I think there's lots of things in my book that a man might not have put in. He'd be too embarrassed.

Betsy: *What would you say to women in literacy programs who might never have thought of writing a story and getting it published as a book?*

Janet: I would tell them: I thought the same way you probably feel, but I encourage you to give it a try. Afterwards, you'll feel really good about yourself. I feel good because I've written a book on my own and had no one tell me what to say.

Is It Her Voice If She Speaks Their Words?

Going through life and not finding your experiences represented is what literacy learners experience. It is powerful when literacy learners get together in groups and name their experiences. We have learned from feminism the power of getting together with people who think and speak the same as you do: when your experiences are confirmed you know you are not crazy.

Language experience stories told by learners to tutors are part of good pedagogy. The stories create effective learning exercises for literacy students. They may also be shared with other learners because they are good learning materials. Learners find these stories interesting when they see their own struggles reflected. Because the language of learners is used in the stories they are easy to read. Language experience stories can also provide a source of inexpensive and creative reading material where materials are sorely needed.

But these stories, if they are part of critical pedagogy, will also have another dimension. This dimension will reflect the intention to bring learners' language into the public sphere. It is within this sphere that the stories demonstrate their power and make visible the class, race and gender bias in language.

It is a transformative act to document learners' lives, to publish oral histories and to bring them into the public realm. Through this act we are challenging what is considered to be literature.

Elaine Gaber-Katz and Jenny Horsman, Women and Literacy, *Canadian Studies*

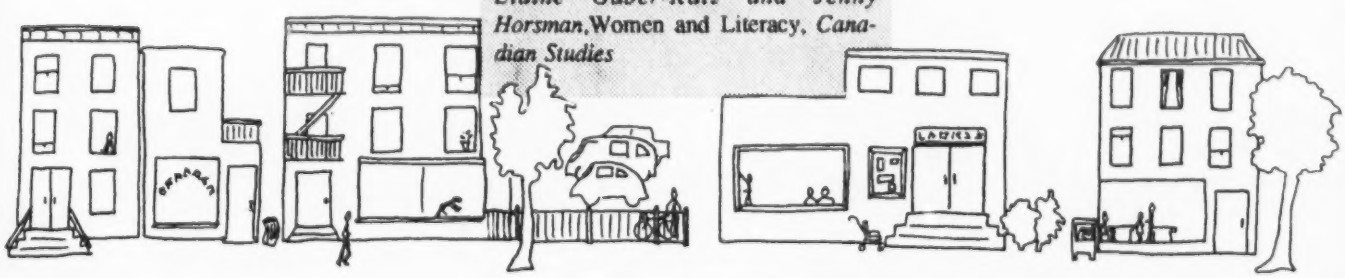
Parkdale Project Read

Parkdale Project Read is a 9 year old community literacy program located in the neighbourhood of Parkdale in Toronto, Canada. About 40 pairs of adult learners and volunteer tutors work together in our program. Another 30 learners attend small learning groups and literacy drop-ins at various times during the week. One of these groups is a Women's Group. Another group meets weekly to work on and generate learner writing.

Our program's purpose is to empower people, by means of improved literacy skills, to participate more fully in decisions that affect their lives. We encourage learners to make decisions about how and what they learn and also to participate in the organization and development of the program. As in other community programs, learners sit on our Board of Directors, help to hire new staff, and participate in program committees.

Learner participation in the program keeps us honest - and aware of some of our shortcomings. The daytime Women's Group, for example, developed out of our growing awareness that many women learners were not being served by our traditional programming.

Betsy Trumpener



Parkdale Project Read 1303 Queen St. West Toronto, Ontario M6K 1L6 (416) 531-6308

DEVELOPING READING AND WRITING SKILLS

SISTREN's Research Workshop

SISTREN's response to problems is collective, creative and dynamic. When some of the actresses were having difficulty scripting their scenes, the group organized a research workshop in reading skills - a workshop which incorporated dance, calisthenics and games as part of the learning process.

Honor Ford-Smith, a member of SISTREN Theatre Collective, tells of the group's experiences:

The workshop had as its objective the creation of dramatic exercises which would teach comprehension and reading skills and develop the critical consciousness of the student. This was the first research workshop in which SISTREN participated.... During the group's first major production, *Bellywoman Bangarang*, the women were asked to script scenes they had created from their own experiences. At this point, I learned that some of the women in the project had more developed reading skills than others. These actresses were able to help others script their scenes and by the end of the production, interest in reading about their personal experiences motivated many to practice their new skills. By the time we got to our second major production, everyone could read her own script.

The research workshop investigated what took place in this process more carefully. In workshop, a wide range of work was done. Physical exercises were based on the shape of the letters. Calisthenics were developed based on the alphabet and, in one case, a dance created from the spelling of the letters of words. Rhythmic sounds and games accompanied these so that letters and sounds were identified. Writing exercises were linked to exercises in conflict resolution, personal awareness and group development. A great many of the exercises have been developed from Augusto Boal's method of problem solving skits. In these, the group develops to a climax a skit on a particular theme. They then stop and ask the rest of the group how the problem should be solved. After a discussion, the solution is enacted.

Reading exercises were often taken from the newspaper. The study of articles in the paper and their accompanying pictures is another example of the type of exercise the group used. After looking at a picture, the women acted out what went before and after the moment captured in the scene. They then read, in character, the newspaper report, and commented on its truthfulness in discussion.

The results of these workshops were recorded by the members of SISTREN and some of the scenes scripted. All writing was done in Creole, since the Creole language is the women's main medium of communication. The Creole was then translated into English. Writing in dialect, with its improvised spelling and immediate flavour, the women learned to write a form of English which had previously been considered "bad, coarse and vulgar." In fact, Jamaican Creole is a variation of English with its own strict rules of grammar, a language which retains much of the Twi construction of its creators. By writing a language which had hitherto been that of a non-literate people, the women broke the silence.

From *Worldlit: Newsletter of World Literacy of Canada*
692 Coxwell Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M4C 3B6

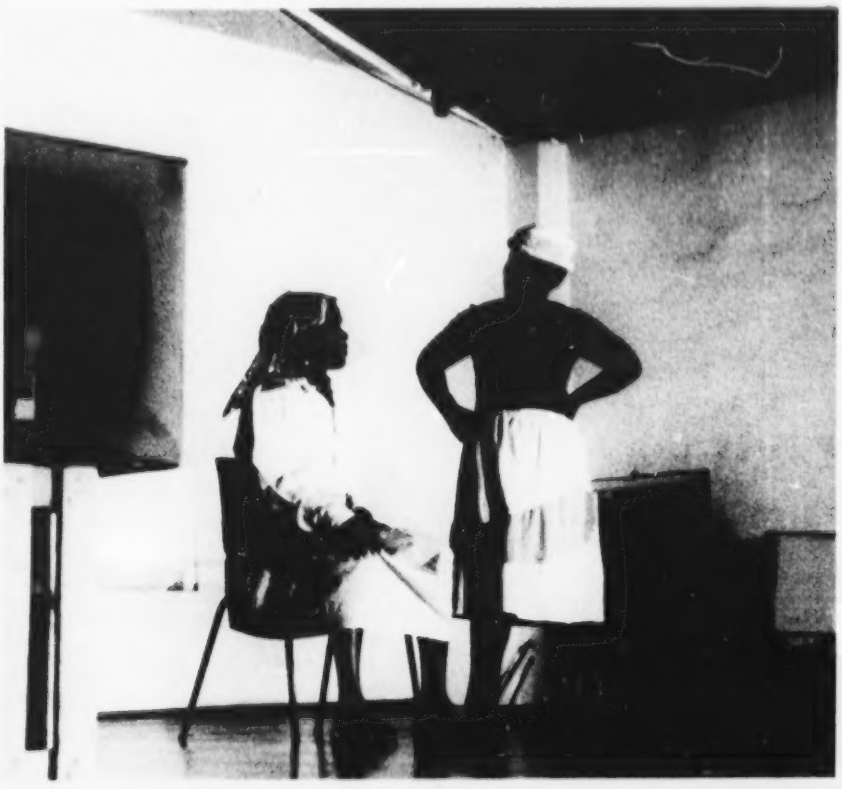


PHOTO SISTREN

by Honor Ford-Smith

A LITERACY KIT FOR PEASANT WOMEN IN MEXICO

by Leonor Aide Concha, María del Carmen Montes, and Sylvia Van Dyck

In the last decade, peasant women in Mexico have begun to develop their own organizational processes. They are increasingly struggling for their specific gender concerns, without ceasing to participate with men in the struggle for land and services, and against repression.

Peasant women's high level of illiteracy (total and functional) is an obstacle to this process. Literacy is being raised more seriously as a legitimate concern. To learn to read and write requires consistency and discipline and it is difficult to find appropriate material and trained women educators.

Given this reality, Mujeres para el Diálogo [Women for Dialogue]* began a project to develop a Literacy Kit to meet the needs of peasant women involved in a variety of organizational processes. With the financial support of a Christian women's group in Stein, Germany, LOLA was produced. It is a manual for facilitators, including a poster for generative words.

The three-woman team in charge of this project tried to capture the theoretical advances in the field of adult literacy. The basic methodology is the one developed by Paulo Freire. The kit intends to link the learning process to an examination and transformation of the reality of the peasants for whom the kit was produced.

The main theme is peasant women's reality. The process begins with a "discovery" of peasant women's identity in terms of what is being done in their daily lives inside and outside their homes. A reflection on family relationships follows, relationships with their mates, with their children and with their communities' traditions and customs. These are followed by a critical examination of education, media and health services. Finally, there is a structural analysis of the Mexican reality (social classes, repression, who owns what in the country, history, etc).

Both theme and methodological development are important in the process. Each lesson (which can be developed in several sessions according to the group's pace) includes a photo on the theme, a generative word, a reading on the topic, questions for discussion, and writing and reading exercises. The kit includes 31 lessons. Reading is in print, writing by hand. It was intended that each lesson include only one new linguistic element, beginning with the most simple and frequent Spanish forms.

The manual for facilitators is a support resource for literacy educators training. It is expected that a week-long workshop developed in conjunction with the manual will enable women who read and write to facilitate literacy training for the illiterate women in their organizations.

We have already held the first training workshop for literacy educators. We are eagerly waiting for the results to show in practice what resulted from this first group of volunteers taking on the challenge of this difficult process together with their compañeras.

**Mujeres para el Diálogo [Women for Dialogue] is a women's non-government organization, of Christian background, peasant and popular women's groups in their educational and organizing efforts.*

Mujeres Para el Dialogo
Apartado Postal 19-493
03910, Mexico
Mexico DF

Lola Manual

We know that there are many women who don't read and write.

This situation puts limits on women to solve certain problems, to learn new things and to improve their lives.

Women who do not read and write, as any other women,

- know and do many things
- can do some accounting in their mind
- they know what they want and what they need.

Women who do not read and write have amassed a great deal of experience throughout their lives. Not reading and writing has not prevented them from:

- developing their memory
- passing on their knowledge
- doing some accounting
- developing their social consciousness
- developing popular organization to transform life conditions
- building women's organizations

What these women have not been able to achieve is to learn to read and write to have more information, which is available in a written form and to communicate their own experience to other people in writing. We want to help women to achieve this.

In some cases, it is believed that illiteracy means that adults can't learn to recognize letters and words or to write them. This is true, but it is only part of it, because literacy's goals broader. Literacy aims to achieve that an adult:

- Understands what she is reading
- Expresses what she thinks in a written form
- Applies reading and writing to her daily life.

For women to be interested in literacy, it will be necessary to link what they are learning with:

- The search for solutions to their problems and needs.
- What they would like to do with reading and writing.

Women who want to become literate will have the opportunity to join the a group to reflect on their problems, search for solutions and to listen to others and thus strengthen and broaden their knowledge. This is a different way of learning.

Excerpt from LOLA, Manual

1990 International Literacy Year

Agenda, Comments, Challenges

The moment the United Nations declared 1990 as International Literacy Year, the international literacy movement began to consider how the Year could strengthen the movement in every corner of the world. The U.N. plan of action is to "help Member States in all regions to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000." A UNESCO statement says that "International Literacy Year (ILY) should not be a 'celebration' but a summons to action." UNESCO will be encouraging action among member states and increasing public awareness and popular participation.

In this framework, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) initiated an International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL) to facilitate the involvement of primarily non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the grassroots of the literacy movement in preparations for the Year.

The Task Force envisions a year which will mark the beginning of a 10 year intensive effort to: dramatically reduce illiteracy in the world; mobilize resources from the grassroots and factory floors through governments and educational institutions; recognize that illiteracy is a problem of both industrialized and non-industrialized nations; not confuse a campaign against illiteracy with a campaign against illiterate people; link literacy to the achievements of social, economic and political democracy; strengthen the organizations of women, the poor, the jobless and the landless; result in increased empowerment of people, not increased dependency; and result most importantly in strengthened permanent structures for promoting literacy and adult education at governmental and non-governmental levels.

(excerpted from *1990: International Literacy Year*)

1990: International Literacy Year is the newsletter of the International Task Force on Literacy. The newsletter is available in English, French and Spanish free of charge by writing to the ITFL Coordinating Office, 720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 2R4.

A report entitled "A Practical Guide for Non-Governmental Organizations, UNESCO Clubs, Associated Schools and Other Interested Groups" has been prepared by the NGO Standing Committee. It contains suggestions for activities for International Literacy Year. This and other reports on preparations for ILY can be obtained by writing to: Secretariat for International Literacy Year, UNESCO House, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

The definition of empowerment means not only the ability to have individual action but the ability to see the problem as a group problem and therefore to see the collective dimensions of the problem and the possiblities for collective solutions to the problem.
Nellie Stromquist

FIVE CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S LITERACY*

The challenges facing women's literacy are formidable. But this does not mean that they cannot be met. They will have to be taken into account simultaneously and they will need persistent attention. Action without theory, decoding/encoding skills without an understanding of how oppression emerges and persists, the unquestioned use of state agencies, the accumulation of unanswered questions regarding literacy process, and legislation without enactment, are fundamental and actual conditions that inhibit the social transformation required to make women's literacy a part of the social order.

**These five challenges are based on Nellie Stromquist's presentation "Women and Literacy, What Next?" at the 1989 Symposium on Women and Literacy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Stockholm, Sweden, and on the revised written version "Challenges to the Attainment of Women's Literacy", Nellie Stromquist, School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0031 USA.*

1.

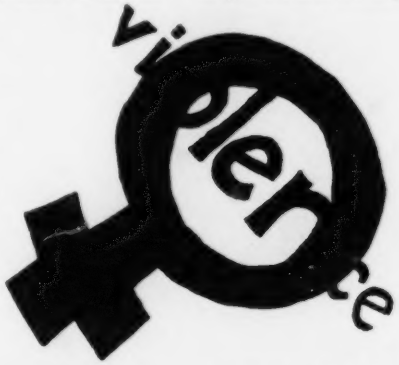
THE CHALLENGE OF FEMINIST THEORY. Many empirical studies have generated a long list of factors influencing the condition of women and affecting women's primary and formal education - lack of time, lack of motivation, distance to class or school, family responsibilities, opposition by husbands or fathers, and so on. Taken as "obstacles" to women's literacy, they become the basis for policy. But this confuses the immediate manifestations of women's subordination with fundamental factors behind them. Solutions that accommodate women's lack of time are short term and actually accommodate a status quo detrimental to women. The challenge of feminist theory is to uncover the systematic mechanisms behind such "obstacles." Feminist scholars have identified two mutually supportive and powerful mechanisms of subordination; the sexual division of labour and the control of women's sexuality. These concepts increase our analytical power to understand how conditions of women's subordination persist and how change will take more than just ingenious program design. Feminist theory helps us locate "obstacles" in specific man-made institutions that form the society in which we live, so we can take a more sceptical analytical look at the state, the diffuse set of social forces that we call culture, the family, education. In the family and in the community or society, a notion of virginity, a sexual double standard, women's lack of physical mobility and physical violence in the household produce a psychological constraint on women's activities and a real control of their activities via their sexuality. We need to use a conceptual framework that looks behind the "obstacles" to women's literacy and women's development to a systematic order of control.

2.

THE CHALLENGE OF STRATEGY. With the global economic and financial crises and because of the sexual division of labour, women bear the burden of reproduction as well as take on productive responsibilities and struggle for rights in labour legislation. How can we be sensitive to the tensions in women's responsibilities? How do we make sure that they're not simply engaged in a solution of basic needs but are moving towards a social restructuring? The strategic challenge is how to develop productive programs that allow women to have access to financial resources, to remunerated wages, but at the same time not make the mistake of simply moving the problem from reproduction to production. The first strategic challenge to literacy programs is how to combine women's practical (reproductive) needs and their strategic needs (changing the sexual division of labour, the conditions of women as workers, their legal rights, and their rights as

autonomous citizens). A second strategic challenge is to design literacy programs that combine political/psychological knowledge with skills aimed at remunerative work, and income-generating projects that include not only literacy skills but such skills as collective organization and gender consciousness. A third strategic challenge is to understand and combat the false dichotomies in discourses on social and gender transformation - productivity versus equity, efficiency versus equity, women's empowerment versus the "danger" brought to their well-being by empowerment. A fourth strategic challenge is to pay as much attention to the process of women's literacy as to the outcome. We need to be attentive to how women learn and be willing to utilize all existing spaces for action.

THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING AGENCY SELECTION. If we want to have literacy for women, who gets to do it? Systematic studies of program implementation have been very few. Evaluations of UNESCO experimental programs conducted by government agencies in 11 countries for 2-5 years in the late sixties provide overwhelming evidence that some of the benefits that supposedly accrue from government action –coordination, a more rational and sophisticated teacher training, development of materials, outreach to a large number of populations in need, production of materials sensitive to the needs of various groups and coordination among the various levels of government, between education and agriculture, agriculture and health and so on– do not materialize. If we want to serve the needs of women in literacy programs, then it is sensible that social sectors other than the state should be given a role in the provision of education. Especially for women, non governmental organizations run by women represent a very powerful avenue for the incorporation of changes, and for creative, innovative, holistic approaches to the education of women. Those who have given the greatest degree of invention and commitment have been NGOs, and they need to be given much more attention.



THE CHALLENGE OF RESEARCH. Many issues remain to be investigated when we are trying to understand the condition of women. We need to have a much greater understanding of the household dynamics that affect the participation of women and how the negotiation of decision making within the family affects how women enter literacy programs or wish to enter literacy programs. We still need to have much more evidence on what are effective techniques to deal with adult women, and on what is an effective mix of visual and text stimuli in the production of literacy programs. Literacy programs go beyond technical programs, but we still need that information. We need more information on the kinds of supportive settings that enable women to enter and sustain participation in a literacy program, and on the physical and psychological constraints on women's participation at the community level as well as the household level.

The research challenge is also to produce a knowledge which breaks the subject/object dichotomy, so that in the process illiterate women are part of, and become able to see themselves as a part of, larger processes that organize literacy/illiteracy.

THE CHALLENGE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION. Policy provides leverage for action to gain women's legal rights in practice, where international pressure may be brought to bear such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ratified by 54 countries. Significantly, most of the countries that have not yet ratified the convention include African and Arab countries with high rates of female illiteracy. While laws and official commitment exist, concrete programming lags. The challenge is to lobby governments to force their attention to programs, and to convince international aid agencies to use groups outside the state for the provision of literacy to women.

Welcome International Literacy Year 1990 as a measure to bring attention and reflection to these problems and challenges. A decade will not be enough to gain the financial and organizational support required to meet them. States will have to work with women and NGOs, and men will have to be persuaded that we all stand to gain as a restructured social order emerges.

DEEPENING THE ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES OF ILY

Much of the accepted wisdom about literacy needs to be critically examined in relation to advances and retreats in literacy over the past decades. The period prior to and during ILY could be seen as a time for intense questioning and debate, along with a solid program of research and evaluation. The findings from these activities would allow the international literacy movement to launch a decade of work on literacy between 1990 and 2000 on a much surer footing.

Literacy, Democracy and Empowerment

Empowerment through literacy is seen as having to do not only with empowerment in the larger society, but also in the power relations of learner/teacher or facilitator in the literacy classroom. If literacy is understood not only as reading and writing skills but also as having a "voice," a space for action in one's society, how do we understand the forces that impede literacy? In what ways do new literacy skills actually bring empowerment within families, communities, workplaces and societies? Does this work differently for women than for men? What chance is there of using new literacy skills in the current economic crisis when there are no books and no literate environment anyway?

Images Of Literacy and the Literate

Illiteracy often becomes part of a broad social pathology that implicitly or explicitly blames illiteracy for the social problems of unemployment, poor health, low productivity, weak family management, and school failure. There are war metaphors ("campaigns to eradicate illiteracy," "the battle of the book," "pencils as weapons.") There are health metaphors (illiteracy as a "plague" or a "scourge.") What would more adequate images of literacy and the illiterate look like? How will this be different in the North and the South? Given the stigma of illiteracy in the industrialized countries, is there a danger that ILY publicity will result in driving illiterates underground? How can we build a communications strategy into the ITFL?

Liberatory Goals

Literacy programs understood as a process of liberation at times have shown more concern with conscientization than with actual reading and writing skills, while in reality both must be accomplished simultaneously. We need better articulation between governments, NGOs and popular social movements to get the right mix for realizing both technical/pedagogical goals and political/ideological goals.

Teachers

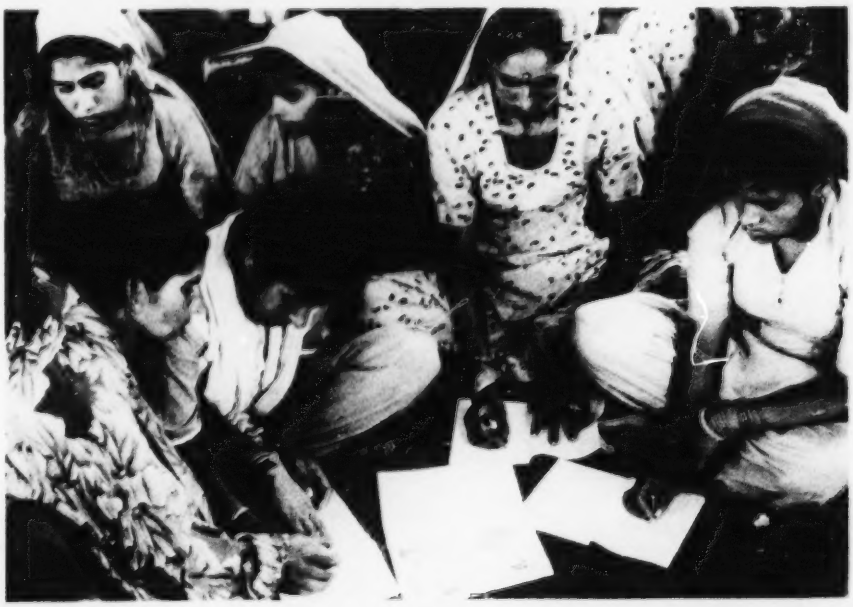
Are trained teachers a huge potential resource for literacy–or a guarantee of failure? In some countries teachers are seen as inextricably tied into authoritarian, traditional, vertical teaching processes, the antithesis of the pedagogy of empowerment espoused by popular educators.

South-North Exchanges

There are very different uses for literacy skills in the literacy environments of industrialized and non-industrialized countries. We need to combat the marginalization of literacy workers in industrialized countries, within the world literacy movement in general, and in the specific context of ILY preparations. We need South-North exchanges in order to feed the long and rich experience and action on literacy in the South into the North.

Women's Literacy

Women's experiences of illiteracy and the doors opened to them by new literacy skills are fundamentally different from those



by Judith Marshall

of men. New abilities to speak, read, write and count work for men in different ways than they do for women. And the willingness of illiterate women and men to make a time commitment to literacy is determined largely by their assessment of what kinds of doors will be opened to them by literacy. We need to create opportunities for women to speak about their experiences of literacy. This includes paying attention both to the assumptions about women's role in a society that silences literate women and also to the specific structural constraints of domestic labour and childcare that impede women's participation in literacy.

There are widespread practices of literacy throughout the world in very small groups, often of ten or twelve people at the local level. Given that NGOs tend to be very weakly linked, often this work in literacy finds NGOs reinventing the wheel. In some regions, such as Latin America, there has been a widespread NGO abandonment of literacy, with priorities now put on conscientization, cooperatives, women, health, etc. How do we understand this? And are these other activities appropriate points of entry for literacy at a later phase?

Research about actual literacy practices should be carried out and communicated in such a way as to have immediate usefulness for these involved in literacy at the grassroots. There should be concrete case studies of real successes and failures. Approaches should be based on action research and participatory evaluation models. Full use should be made of already existing research and evaluation structures, including existing ICAE networks, universities, institutes, and so on.

We need not question the "why" of literacy. What we need are much clearer strategies for "how" and "when" and "with whom" for literacy to be effective within the larger process of strategies both for survival and economic/political/social change.

Judith is a member of the International Task Force on Literacy. This is an abridged version of her report to the Women's Leadership Development Seminar in International Adult Eduction, Quito, Equador, October 1988.

SOBERING THOUGHTS

Literacy For What? Strategies With Women in Mind

Excerpts from a report by Lalita Ramdas, Society for Alternatives in Education, New Delhi, India from her report to the International Task Force on Literacy, April, 1989.

Radical rhetoric is no substitute for change in practice. For millions of people, reality continues to be a life of toil, struggle, hunger, ill health and little hope. Learning to read and write is a meaningless skill under circumstances where they can feed themselves only by selling their labour and that of their children and where struggles for more justice are met with violence from the same State that promised them so much.

Literacy needs to be redefined drastically. Literacy cannot remain at the level of learning the alphabet and signing your name. Today thousands of groups are working at the lowest levels of the social order, with or without government support, to enable those people to obtain in reality all the promises of freedom and justice.

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The view of literacy as an important tool of democratic rights, liberation struggles, and equality for every citizen is not universally shared. Regarding women and equality, for example, we are assuming that most Indians or most men in our society can see that equality for women is an ideal value and that literacy for women and girls is a must. Similarly, the "small family norm" has been accepted by the State as a desirable goal. How have women been involved in that decision? And how can literacy help to realize that goal?

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Can literacy provide jobs and employment? Can literacy empower people to stand up for their rights, to demand what is legitimately theirs without inviting repression, violence and imprisonment? Can literacy counter patriarchy and truly lead to women's equality?

Our community workers are indifferent. Their concerns centre on whether it will help them get decent space or a building or books in the hands of each learner, or to deal with the drought or the revival of sati (women burning themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres), and whether it will help them cope with violence in the community. Many have given up on adult literacy and believe we should mobilize efforts to ensure that children get a decent education and become literate, as the best method for long-term adult literacy.

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It is not enough to run special programs for women. Some of the hope for women's literacy rests on hard work with men regarding women's equality. We are fighting an ideological and practical battle over the views of women and their roles in society. Unless traditional values of and attitudes towards women and women's roles in society are tackled directly and honestly, women will continue to be mere "objects" of development, or of literacy programs, instead of active, free and willing partners and participants of their own.

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World organizations routinely and grandiosely declare International Year after International Year. Governments and UN groups whip into action. Millions are spent on the production of glossy brochures, campaigns, hand-outs, seminars and consultancies. Activity peaks mid-year. The media keep the issue alive. Barely does the curtain come down on the Year for Women, then preparations begin for the Year of the...Child, Disabled, Aged, Homeless. But what of 'business as usual?" Who draws up the balance sheet at the end of it all? Is it only left to the busy accountants and auditors of countless organizations the world over?

Lalita Ramdas
ITFL India Office
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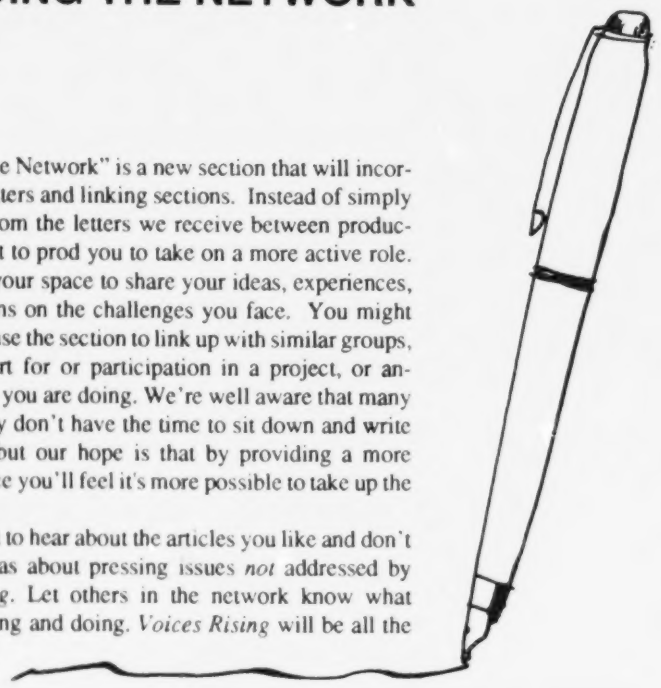
17-B Indra Prastha arg
New Delhi - 1100002 INDIA

BUILDING THE NETWORK



"Building The Network" is a new section that will incorporate our letters and linking sections. Instead of simply excerpting from the letters we receive between production, we want to prod you to take on a more active role. This can be your space to share your ideas, experiences, and reflections on the challenges you face. You might also want to use the section to link up with similar groups, solicit support for or participation in a project, or announce work you are doing. We're well aware that many of you simply don't have the time to sit down and write full articles but our hope is that by providing a more informal space you'll feel it's more possible to take up the debate.

We want to hear about the articles you like and don't like as well as about pressing issues *not* addressed by *Voices Rising*. Let others in the network know what you're thinking and doing. *Voices Rising* will be all the richer for it.

KISIM SAVE SKUL BILONG OL MERI:

Urban Skills Program for Women, Goroka, Papua New Guinea

I am an Australian Volunteer Abroad (AVA) employed by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province. My job title is "Field Training Officer" and I came to Papua New Guinea in July 1988 to work with the YWCA to plan, develop and implement a non-formal education program for women in the Goroka YWCA's recently constructed multipurpose building.

Through a process of consultation with local women and with individuals, agencies and organizations working with women, a program relevant to the women's needs has been gradually developed. The overwhelming request from the women themselves for activities at the Training Centre was for "tok pisin" literacy. With this objective in sight, the urban skills program has been developed to incorporate, initially, literacy and later numeracy and practical skills such as how to open and operate a bank account, legal awareness and health care.

During the early days I wrote to agencies, organizations and individuals within the country and internationally working on Women in Development issues, initiating valuable networking links and acquiring the most recent and relevant information and material available on work with women and literacy. Development workers shouldn't have to reinvent the wheel every time we go into the field. With networking we learn from each other's succcess and failures: expecially working with women, so much of our history gets "lost."

We started with two groups of women from two different parts of Goroka: North Goroka and a neighbouring village, Mastlakaufa. We now have five groups. Each group attends the Training Centre twice a week. Interest expressed by local women has been very high, and the eagerness with which these women arrive every day is very rewarding and inspiring.

Literacy is a real need in these women's lives. Women's illiteracy rates in Papua New Guinea are between 75-80 percent, so we have plenty of willing participants. Fifteen to fifty year olds are coming with equal keenness and almost all of them have never been to school before. Most of the women say that they never thought they'd get the opportunity to learn to read and write after having missed out on attending school as children.

The Training Centre has an experienced Kisim Save teacher, Anna Maben, who has been active in women's activities in Simbu Province previously. We are existing on very little money at the moment, and we have started the program with bare essentials only: mats, a blackboard, butcher's paper and chalk. We received a small grant from the Australian High Commission which has helped us purchase some Kisim Save literacy kits from Christian Books Melanesia, other pidgin books and teaching aids, and a little furniture. We are optimistic about a submission we have made to the National Government's Literacy Development Program, and also to the Australian YWCA for funding.

We have many ideas for the Training Centre. I am presently compiling a list of resource people who are willing to come and lead sessions regularly in their particular fields, for instance, a woman solicitor, a health educator, a Christian Institute of Counselling volunteer. I am endeavouring to build up local resources so that the program can be maintained on its own.

I would like to organize a workshop to train Kisim Save teachers. There has been a lot of interest expressed by women leaders of particular church women's fellowship groups locally to learn how to teach so that they can introduce a Kisim Save program into their own work. By providing resources and training, we can encourage the opportunity for Kisim Save to be extended to a wider network of women.

Enabling women to become literate is an essential tool in encouraging women's development. Literacy rates are significant when looking at infant mortality and general health statistics, and it seem the two are

directly linked. I have found from personal experience of our Kisim Save Skul in Goroka that women's self esteem and confidence and general understanding of themselves and the world around them is hugely increased as they become literate. If women see themselves as capable and intelligent human beings, as they are beginning to, instead of "mi meri tasol, mi samting nating," they will demand and command respect in this society.

Please feel free to contact me for further information about Kisim Save Skul Bilong Ol Meri. Or better still, drop in and see us if you're in the neighbourhood. Visitors are always most welcome, and then the women themselves can tell you about our "lik lik skul."

Debbie Chapman
Field Training Officer
YWCA Goroka
P.O. Box 636,
Goroka, EHP,
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Ed Note: A more recent report from Debbie outlines numerous plans for the Next Year. These include:

1) In 1990, UN International Literacy Year, the Y's Women's Training Centre will be encouraging, supporting and initiating literacy projects wherever possible throughout Papua New Guinea. Publicity, information dissemination and visits will be used to encourage projects as well as direct sharing of ideas, resources and materials.

2) A workshop is planned to train interested local women to initiate and run literacy projects. Funding has been received from the New Zealand High Commissioner and documentation and packaging will be able to be duplicated in other parts of the country. The Goroka Training Cente will become a resource centre as well as provide direct programming to the women of Goroka.

3) More production of material in 'tok pisin' with a view to commercial printing and distribution. This will encourage indigenous literature, and could be a source of raising funds for the Training Centre.

4) The establishment of a retail outlet for books so that the profits of the bookshop could go towards subsidizing the programs at the Training Centre.

POPULAR EDUCATION AMONG WOMEN NETWORK

Puno Peru

The articles in *Voices Rising* are excellent, mostly because they address the issue of literacy, which is essential to us in Peru. In Puno, where we live, on the shore of Titicaca Lake, in a cold and dry climate, the high rate of illiteracy is one of the indicators of the isolation and discrimination suffered by women. Our population lives mostly (70%) in rural areas, and more than half are women. In the rural area the illiteracy rate is 54.4% and in the urban areas is 28.8% among women. Literacy work and training is difficult and our organization together with other organizations in Puno have created a district network for popular education among women.

All the organizations within the space of our network are advancing, contributing experiences, possibilities and a common concern in making it possible for women to participate more in the public life of the district and the region.

We need your support with documentation on literacy and perhaps with some funds that would contribute to reduce the high illiteracy rate. As well, we would like to know of events related to this problem and training possibilities for literacy educators in the Latin American language.

We will send you news of our experience in literacy and on popular education. We enclose our Constitution. We want all those related to ICAE to know about them. We are sending a copy of our declaration in support of women prisoners in South Africa.

Sonia Molina, President
Amparo Choquehuanca L., Secretary
ORMUP
Calle Deza 750, Apdo. 477,
Puno, Peru

Our Constitution

On May 17, 1989, in Chucuyto-Puno (Peru) the Popular Education Network Among Women was created. Twenty-one delegates attended the inaugural event representing public, private, women's and women's peasant organizations in Puno.

During the debate, in which everyone participated, the most important opinions were:

- That women are always manipulated, that financial support is conditioned to electoral work; that women in rural areas always need men's support for many formal procedures because they are afraid of expressing their needs before the institutions. That there is discrimination in food support to single and young mothers. That men in the communities charge their part for the procedures, but they do not allow women to do it by themselves, and that they drink too much.
- That many women don't read or write and that priority should be given to the peasant sector because the peasant women is over exploited and marginalized, without access to education, and that no one shows concern for their training or for allowing them to know their rights.
- That to have access to assistance women must know how to read and write and the mothers' organizations operate only when there is food support.
- That we must defend our own ways, our culture, our ways of nutrition, our folklore.
- That women in the cities are in extreme poverty because prices have raised and there is not enough money for rent, food, and water and electricity services, and that we have to go out and protest in an organized way.
- That we have to develop a solidarity practice among women and that within the network there are women that can help a lot in training.

◆ That everything goes to the cities and nothing for the rural side, that there is a great deal of centralization and the red tape is cumbersome, and that in the city they spend too much money, forgetting about people in the country side. There is no work for women, they are marginalized and have no opportunities for training. The rural woman is marginalized because she does not speak Spanish and always is afraid of talking to city people.

◆ That it is necessary for women to participate more fully in the production process and in all levels of public life, and that women must be well informed.

u That many times women's participation is dependent on the leaders allowing it, who first ensure that it will be convenient for them that women know things; if there is no problem in this they will allow women's participation. The topic of political manipulation was widely discussed.

There was a discussion about the need for popular education as a positive alternative for women.

Network's Objectives

◆ To promote social change, through the practice of popular education among women.

◆ To practice solidarity, coordination and experiences and resources sharing within the network and with other groups.

◆ To contribute to women's organization, empowerment and participation in the process of transforming society.

Fields of work

◆ Communication
◆ Literacy
◆ Health Care and Nutrition
◆ Research and Resources
◆ Production
◆ Legal Training
◆ Organization
◆ Popular Culture

Methodology:

Popular education will be based in popular knowledge and will be in constant evolution according to daily life and the national situation. Popular education is a means to achieve a global transformation of society, where the different forms of exploitation and oppression will be eliminated. Popular education allows for a coordination of popular sectors.

North of Ireland

I am writing on behalf of the Centre for Research and Documentation, a community resource organisation based in West Belfast in the North of Ireland. This organisation was set up last year when a group of Irish people who had been working in third world countries and community workers came together to discuss the links between the countries we had worked in and the current situation in Ireland and also to use the experience and insights we had gained in these countries upon our return to Ireland.

We are involved in many issues here throughout the country ranging from unemployment, emigration, repression, "women's issues" etc. We resource community groups here and organise exchanges between groups north and south. We also work a lot with women's groups. I was wondering if you could put us on your mailing list and maybe send us a list of different international women's groups, particularly in Central America. I was working there three years before coming home to Ireland.

Anyway I look forward to hearing from you and if there is anything we can do from this end please do let me know. We keep a wide range of information (newspaper cuttings, articles etc.) on a variety of topics (political issues in the North and South of Ireland, discrimination, unemployment, emigration, third world, etc.) A large part of our work is organising programmes for international visitors from countries like Central America, South Africa, Vietnam, Philippines to meet with local community groups here in the North of Ireland and to share perspectives.

Mise le meas

Caitriona Ruane
Co-ordinator, Centre for Research and Documentation
89B Glen Road
Belfast, Antrim BT11
NORTH OF IRELAND

Brazil

We are a group of Brazilian Black Women working with low income Black Women in our region and we are organizing the 1st CONGRESS OF BLACK WOMEN FROM BAIXADA SANTISTA, days 11 to 14 of May, in Santos City, Sao Paulo State.

We are interested in being in touch with ICAE (Women's Program) because in Brazil the illiteracy of the Black Women is very high: about 1/2 of all the Black Women here are illiterate. We want to change this scenary and this Congress is a space for reflection and debate about this and other problems which confine Black Women to the lowest rank among the Brazilian workers.

To give us solidarity and the experience of other countries would be a great advancement for our local strategies of empowerment.

Alzira Rufino
Encontro de Mulheres Negras da Baixada Santista
c/o CEFAS
rua Vasco de Gama, 87
Santos, Sao Paulo
BRAZIL

SHARING STRATEGIES AROUND GENDER AND TRAINING

South Africa

I work for a rural development agency that is based in Natal and Kwazulu, South Africa. I am currently involved in doing participatory evaluation work with a number of our projects. My specific focus is on organisation, gender relations and women's participation.

One of the ways that both fieldworkers and rural workers come to define their role in development is in a training situation. This training may be either formal (structured learning sessions) or informal (learning how to deal with daily problems). I have found that both structured and informal training sessions can play a valuable role in facilitating broader consciousness of the development context. However, I have not found many "training materials" that deal with the specific conditions facing rural women or how to struggle with patriarchal gender relations, in a colonial and capitalist context. I am interested in finding out more about those practical strategies which have worked for *Voices Rising* readers. What training materials or workshops have you developed that deal with these issues?

For instance, do you use similar training strategies when you are working with women's, men's or mixed groups? How do you facilitate and encourage women's autonomy when all the fieldworkers are men and the majority of rural groups consist of women? Given that structured training often works best over a few days or weeks in an environment away from home, how do you deal with resistant husbands? Some women won't leave home without their husbands' permission. In these cases should the educators continue working only with those women who are "allowed" to attend? What practical strategies have been devised to move from a welfare to a transformative approach? For example, how do you both respect women and challenge the traditional sexual division of labour with women whose primary interest is sewing? Is such a challenge always desirable? How do you deal with the conflict between short and long-term interests? Say, if rural women are totally dependent on remittances from migrant husbands is it appropriate to encourage an articulation of their 'anger' with men and/or husbands?

I would like to hear from any other readers who are grappling with some of these issues or have prepared training materials that are both practically feasible as well as politically challenging. I'm especially interested in materials that combine both technical and organ 'ational "knowledge" on an integrated way.

Michelle Freedman,
AGENDA: A Journal About Women and Gender
P.O. Box 37432
Overport 4067
SOUTH AFRICA

We'd also be interested in your reflections on Michelle's questions. Let's start a discussion around these issues in the pages of *Voices Rising*. Send us copies of relevant resources, letters and articles.

India

I saw *Voices Rising* on my table when I came back to India after spending about 45 days in Italy with 120 friends from 90 countries. The bulletin not only gave us novel ideas & experiences but it is a strength and solidarity to us in our struggle with traditional Fishing Women for liberation.

I met many women of USA, Europe and Australia having concern for the situation for women in India. They encouraged me in my mission. My friends at home also share their frustrating experiences while working with the fishing women in India. Some times I am in confusion. What to do and what not to do.

Women in Indian countryside live in deprivation. We intend to organise them into cohesive groups. We help them to undertand and articulate their situations. We facilitate them to recognise the forces that oppress them. We motivate them to be organised.

When we work with education, health, and other awareness programs, people in countryside ask for food, shelter and clothes. Unfortunately, we don't have resources to meet all these. The material needs of such people could not be met permanently, unless our resources in India are genuinely distributed. People need to understand, realise this and to challenge the distributory channel.

But unforuntately the degree of deprivation is so acute that they don't have patience and power to wait for a new wave to come. They intend to have an immediate result. As a result the movement gets lost midway before it reaches the desired goal.

However we learn from our frustration. Our experience is more broad reading your report on building leadership. Hope this newsletter would be a media for us to reach with the friends, those who are also in the process of struggle for LIBERATING WOMEN.

With Solidarity,

Laxmidhar Swain,
CARD - Centre for Action Research and Documentation
L/353, Dumuduma Housing Board
P.O. Aiginia
Bhubaneswar, Orissa, 751002
INDIA

Costa Rica

We are trying to develop an educational program related to women's issues. We utilize a popular education methodology on topics such as: domestic work, working women, women in the media, abortion, battered women, women's sexuality. We would like to receive information about similar programs in other countries.

We are also providing direct services to battered women and doing community education on violence against women. If you have a brochure addressing this problem, we would like to receive it.

I have given *Voices Rising* to a woman in a small community, who shared it with other women. They thought it was very valuable and they liked the articles dealing with other women's experiences. We have to take into account the level of formal education of many women in the rural areas of Costa Rica, and the circumstances that prevent them taking full advantage of articles that are a little bit too advanced for them.

I hope we keep in touch.

Norma Jean Profitt M.
MUSADE
Mujeres Unidas en Salud y Desarrollo
Women United for Health and Development
Apartado 17, San Ramón, Alejuela
COSTA RICA

Please note that MUSADE is looking to receive materials and information about programs related to violence against women. VR

Nepal

The theme of your Quito Seminar and the main focus of latest issue of VR, "Building Leadership, Building the Movement" really needs some further discussions in the whole international arena. From my side, I also think the traditional concept of "Leadership" and "Charismatic Leader" is only enough to maintain the status-quo. We need to promote alternative concepts of leadership in order to achieve progressive transformation of world communities and societies. Thanks for your initiating the way out.

The interview with Kathy Bond-Stewart is quite worth publishing. We could know a great deal about Zimbabwian situation and the situation there. Also, the way of producing a popular text is interesting and meaningful.

This time, besides sharing the magazine to read among friends here, I made some xerox copies of the *Special Report* section and sent them to many friends working in different parts of Nepal. I have also encouraged them to write to you, especially I asked women development workers here to go through it.

From my side, I will be sending you my comments, sharing your magazine among many friends here, encouraging others to contact you, and I would also translate some relevant articles into Nepali and give them to publish in magazines here.

Bimal Phunyal
CARE-NEPAL
P.O. Box 1661
Kathmandu
NEPAL

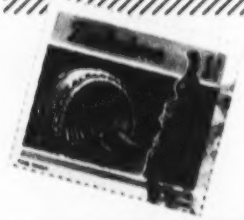
Cuba

We think is of great value to share experiences among those of us working in popular education. For us it is very important to be included in your popular educators and activists network, because our Regional Centre in Havana, Cuba has been opening spaces in women's training in Latin America.

Presently, taking into account the social and political changes occurring in our region and women's important role both in popular struggles and organizations, we have committed ourselves to work in three main areas: Training (through three-month courses in Havana, field courses for organizations who require them and workshops on specific topics such as, women, health care, methodology for women's skill development and others); Documentation (development of a documentation centre and making links with other similar centres); Research on different women's issues.

We have done eighteen courses with the participation of more than 500 women from Latin American and Caribbean organizations. These women are grouped in a network which will allow us to follow up the training process. We are sure that the links established with you will be of mutual support.

Concepción Dumois
Director
Federación Democrática Internacional de Mujeres, Centro Regional
Regional Centre, Women's International Democratic Federation
Calle 20 N° 117, entre 1ª y 3ª, Miramar, Ciudad de La Habana, CUBA



Argentina

The Foundation for Study and Research about Women (FEIM) is formed by a group of professional women in different specialties. Since 1984 we have been working in women's training and mobilization in popular sectors in Argentina. We began in 1984 with the Program Women and Development in the Ministry of Health and Welfare. After the government changed in July 1989, we ceased working at the Ministry and concentrated our energies in FEIM and with other NGOs.

Our major experience has been training women as health care facilitators. Between 1985-86 we trained 500 women in Buenos Aires and the provinces of Rio Negro and Neuquen. These were 20-26 year old women who were trained in programs using a participatory methodology. Since 1988 we have been training older women (seniors) in Retiree Centres. We've had six seminars with 330 participants. These woman have more concern and possibilities of working in the field than younger women. After the training we do a follow up, focusing on their organization in groups. Seventy per cent of the women trained are working in the field.

Another aspect of our work is the promotion of women's rights and training on this subject. Between 1985-89 we organized 2-day workshops in different parts of the country focusing on women's rights (as workers, in social security, health, family, education and politics) and how to apply them in the daily life.

Mabel Bianco, President
FEIM
Foundation for Women's Studies and Research
Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer.
Vte. López 2602, p. 13 -
(1425) - Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA
Phone 802-3635

Zimbabwe

I enjoyed reading the Rising Voices. Its contents are nothing but truth. The Sistren case, is what I mentioned on the 26th August at the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau Conference. International donor agencies policies are very suppressive, as a result so much money has been spent on programs which don't meet our requirements and needs. This is an issue which the Women's Program can really voice out on our behalf. We in Africa need adult literacy and training in technical skills as mentioned in the questionnaire. Literacy and production should go hand in hand. We would like to be involved in The Women's Program as much as possible.

We will be setting up our offices on the 1st October 1989. A program has already been drawn up and we will be working in partnership with Foundation for International Training in Canada. For your information it is the only organisation which has had an ear to listen to what we want. We are very excited as our approach will be a departure from what has been going on. Maybe some of the International donor agencies will believe that we mean what we have been talking about that what they want is not what we want.

Well, I think I have said quite a mouthful.

Esinet Mapondera,
Zimbabwe Women Finance Trust
P.O. Box 8023
Causeway, Harare
ZIMBABWE

Peru

Our best regards from all of us working with women in the Amauta Association. The Amauta Association is a non-profit organization. We have been supporting popular organizations in our district, mainly those in the mining industry, mostly trade unions and the Miners Housewives Committees (Comité de Amas de Casa Mineras), which represent the miner's wife or daughters, whose experience in labour struggles is widely known. Our objective is that these organizations work not only on labour issues but that they begin to address those issues related to women's problems and women's education. Thus we are working in training and advising these organizations to allow them to broaden their space of action. Our main work is to train facilitators in health care and law. We will be sending you an article on our experience.

Rubi Paredes D.
AMAUTA
C.C. Independencia
Esq. Av. Independencia - Calle Paucarpata
Block D Of. 433
Arequipa, PERU

Thailand

Thank you for your letter and a copy of *Voices Rising*. We are glad about the work the ICAE (Women's Program) is doing. We found the *Voices Rising* bulletin to have valuable experience taken from all corners of the world.

Our organization just have 10 years old on 16 May 1989. At present we have 1600 active members from a total company head count of 2000, about 90 percent of members are female. Therefore Adult Education Programme must be necessary for our members.

We would also like to share information and gain experience from other women's groups around the world. "Welcome to Thailand" for the World Assembly of Adult Educators in January, 1990.

In Solidarity,

Prapapan Jumnakros
Signetics Workers Union
303 Changwatana Road
Bangkhen, Bangkok 10210
THAILAND

Philippines

Thank you very much for sending us a complimentary copy of the Women's Kit (see Resources Section) and Networking Bulletin of the Women's Program *(Voices Rising)*.

Your Women's Kit is very interesting and simple, so it is very appropriate reference especially for peasants level. It will be help to us in our curriculum development for women's group here in Bicol. Here in Bicol, we are also working with Amihan, a peasant women's organization working with Gabriela National; though this organization is still in the formative stage. In a country like the Philippines when militarization intensifies, it is strongly felt in the countryside. And it is the peasant sector who is greatly affected, especially their organization. We welcome why much we could sustained our linkage and information sharing. Since you are working with women sector, your experiences, materials, shared information will update and help us much in our deeper understanding with the women issue and this will help us in our training workshop with the women sector.

Lorna G. Santiago
Philippine Educational Theater Association
P.O. Box 163
Legaspi City
PHILIPPINES

"I wasn't talking . . . I was networking."

A Network Database

Many thanks to all the women who answered the "Activating the Network" questionnaire sent out with the last issue. The response was far greater than we expected! We appreciate everyone who took the time to let us know their thoughts, both supportive and critical. We will be using this information to strengthen *Voices Rising* and also to begin new initiatives to support women educators in their work.

For those of you who didn't fill in and send back the questionnaire, it's not too late. We want to hear from everybody. Don't let the limitations of the questionnaire stop you. Any comments, questions or criticisms, will be useful.

Everyone who wrote back was excited about the potential international database of women's groups and individual practitioners using popular education. Now we want to take the next step and begin to implement it. Our plan is to organize the database by geographical region and by areas of interest (popular health, literacy, workers education, indigenous, etc.). We are still working out details, so it is an ideal stage for you to have input. Would you find such a database useful? If so, do you have suggestions? Would you like to be included in the database? How can we collaborate with already existing regional and international services?

We will be linking the "practitioners database" with the bibliographical data base being developed by the Gender and Popular Education international comparative research project (see insert).

For information about the database write to Shannonbrooke Murphy at the Women's Program Toronto office.

Women and Literacy

Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme, Fall/Winter 1988 (Volume 9, Numbers 3&4).

Review by Kate Nonesuch and Evelyn Battell, literacy instructors, Malaspina College, Duncan, B.C.

We like this issue on *Women and Literacy*. It contains some 40 articles on the subject, plus reviews of films and books, and a short section of fiction and poetry. We like it for many reasons. First, simply because it is a joy to see a discussion of literacy by so many feminists, a series of articles that takes up the differences in men's and women's experiences of literacy and illiteracy. It is also good to see thinking that analyzes the social and political causes of women's oppression and its relationship to women's literacy.

Although many of the articles are theoretical, all are firmly rooted in the experience of women in Canada. Many women's stories are told in their own words: women whose men interfere with their going to school; women who are isolated from other women because of poverty, migration, religion, or socialization; women who go back to school against overwhelming odds; women who find in a literacy class the knowledge and the power to regain some control of their jobs, their families and their lives; and the particular voices of native women, immigrant women, Mennonite women and women of every colour.

We like it because it gives an idea of the range of literacy programs that operate in Canada, with an emphasis on programs that incorporate literacy learning with politicization and movements for social change.

We like it because it takes up the concerns of Canadian literacy activists. These concerns are recurring themes in many of the articles, yet each author approaches them from a slightly different point of view. Here we can only give a brief outline of some of the questions raised:

What is the matter with the Southam Report on Illiteracy? How does it divide us from each other? What are the biases in the report?

Why is literacy such a hot issue these days in government and business circles? How can we analyze the effects these two big players will have on literacy programming?

What is the matter with literacy programs that "blame the victim?" Why do some of our programs offer an individual solution to a problem that has causes in our society and our political systems? Why do we shy away from literacy work that politicizes? What can we transfer from literacy campaigns in revolutionary settings to the Canadian context?

How do we structure programs that answer women's needs in terms of content, scheduling, transportation and daycare? How do we find or create materials that honour their experience?

What is meant by "learner-centred" programming? How can a program be learner-centred if learners have little control over the program?

Questions of language, power and class come up again and again. Most literacy learners are working class and most instructors, tutors and programmers are middle class. However, most jobs available to women require a higher degree of literacy than those available to men; and most instructors and many programmers are women working in an area that requires a good education and doesn't pay very well, relatively speaking.

These are some of the questions raised in these lively articles. The answers are not always clear, but the discussions are fascinating.

One of the triumphs of *Women and Literacy* is the interplay of ideas and information among the articles by different writers. Read them in any order; come back to them and you will find your reading of a second article has taught you a new way of looking at the first. Another highlight is the excerpts of texts and illustrations from books written by women in literacy classes.

If you are a feminist; if you are a literacy worker; if you are interested in the area where these two viewpoints mesh, read this book.

Available from:
Canadian Woman Studies,
212 Founders College
York University
4700 Keele Street
Downsview, Ontario
M3J 1P3

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published by the Participatory Research Group and the ICAE Women's Program

Women Learners in English as a Second Language and literacy classes need their lives outside the classroom to be acknowledged and discussed. The material in this kit describes many everyday issues in women's lives and provides relevant and stimulating material so that women can improve their English skills while considering their real problems.

The Women's Kit is a series of eight booklets plus an introduction. Each booklet is made up of excerpts from materials written by women about their lives in Latin America, Africa, and England.

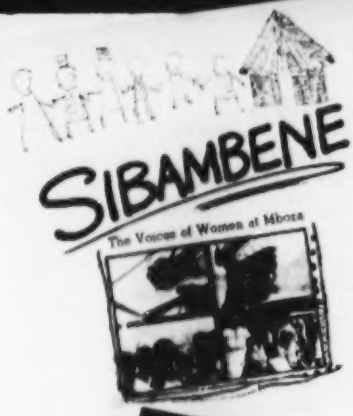
Our aim is to encourage women to engage in discussion and critical thinking about their lives–as homemakers, paid workers; and mothers.

Booklet titles are: Women's Days; Childcare; Health; Housework; Finding Paid Work; Working Conditions; Violence in the Home; and Women Working Together.

Cost: *$40.00 Institutions; $25.00 Individuals; Free to Third World women's and popular education groups.*
Available from: *the Women's Program*
394 Euclid Ave., Suite 308
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6G 2S9

SIBAMBENE: The Voices of Women at Mboza

Hanlie Griesel, text
Ellen Manqele, field assistance
Roselyn Wilson, photographs, design and layout
Ravan Press, P.O. Box 31134, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 2017, South Africa.

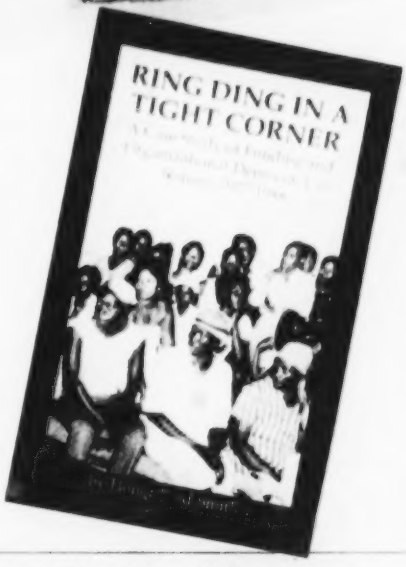


"*Sibambene* is about experiences, and about pooled resources and learning. It is a literacy which women at Mboza have created that is of themselves.

Sibambene is a book produced with a group of women who have had no formal schooling. They live in a rural community known as Mboza where they have recently started to attend literacy classes. Through the text we learn about the realities, the uncertainties, and the hopes of three generations of women.

The fact that it is those who are literate who exercise control over texts serves to perpetuate the mystique of literacy. This book is an explicit attempt to challenge that mystique."

RING DING IN A TIGHT CORNER: Funding and Organizational Democracy in Sistren 1977-1988



by Honor Ford-Smith

The Jamaican women's popular theatre group SISTREN has been internationally acclaimed both for its performances and as a successful example of grassroots women's organization. But SISTREN (and feminist organizations elsewhere) have not managed to contribute significantly to the transformation of gender relations in society.

In *Ring Ding in a Tight Corner*, Honor Ford-Smith, former artisitc director of SISTREN, sets out to analyze the limitations of SISTREN's social impact. In her account of the group's historical and organizational development, she explores: the way international agencies' funding policies exacerbated the internal contradictions of the collective structure; the complex ways the social relations of class, race and political allegiance affected democratic organization and management; and the external and internal conditions which limited the group's ability to respond to the needs of its members and constituency of Jamaican women.

Available from: The Women's Program, 394 Euclid Ave., Suite 308, Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M6G 2S9

Canadian Literacy Materials for Women

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) is currently working on a project to develop an annotated directory of Canadian literacy materials for women. The goal is to identify and collect high quality Canadian literacy materials that respond to and reflect the varied aspirations, interests and learning needs of Canadian women literacy students.

When we first began this project, we were uncertain what we would find. We were aware, from an earlier CCLOW study, that there were very few Canadian literacy materials for women, but we also knew that some exciting new publishing efforts had been initiated, including some student writing and publishing. We wanted to explore these and other potential sources of relevant materials. As a first step, we sent out a questionnaire to women's groups, literacy groups and others involved in women's literacy education throughout Canada. The response has been overwhemingly positive, with most respondents indicating support for the project. Although many do not have materials to recommend, most indicate that they urgently need women's literacy materials for their programs.

A volunteer working group of women literacy practitioners and women experienced with literacy materials is giving leadership to the project. This group has set up criteria to determine which materials will be included in the directory, developed guidlines for selecting and assessing adult literacy materials for women in Canada, designed a book review format and set up a book review process that encourages the participation of women practitioners and learners. Book reviews are being written locally in at least three different regions of the country--by individuals, by student/tutor pairs and by small groups. Whenever possible, literacy practitioners and literacy tutors are providing an opportunity for women literacy students to be involved in this book review process. The resulting directory will be a collection of reviews reflective of the various experiences and opinions of women in different parts of the country. We look forward to receiving these reviews and to compiling the directory early in 1990.

A copy of the directory will be distributed free of charge to all those who sent in information to the project and on a cost-recovery basis to others. For information or a copy of the directory, contact:

The Literacy Materials for Women Project
CCLOW
47 Main Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada, M4E 3V6
Telephone (416) 699-1909

Funding Development: A Case Study From the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe

by Shirley Ross
Intermedia/NCCC, New York, N.Y., 1987, 65pp.

This insightful and practical case study examines the funding experiences of the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe (ALOZ) from 1978 to 1985. It was written to respond to the dearth of material available on fundraising, from the perspective of Third World groups. The study includes an overview of the organizational and financial histories of ALOZ, reflections from the experiences of an ALOZ Program Officer as well as general descriptions and examples of funding development techniques, placed in the context of overall project development, from needs assessment to implementation and evaluation.

Available from: Intermedia, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y., 10115, USA

Buang Basadi, Khulumani Makhosikazi, Women Speak: Conference on Women and Writing

Congress of South African Writers Transvaal Region, 1988, 62pp.

This conference organized by the Transvaal region of the Congress of South African Writers in November 1988 offered women writers and cultural workers a forum to reflect on their role in the context of the national struggle for liberation. Special emphasis was placed on examining the position and experiences of women as writers in South Africa, and the portrayal of women in South African literature. The publication includes papers and poems presented at the conference along with excerpts of the discussions. It provides stimulating and informative insights into women's participation in literature and in the cultural and political life of South Africa generally.

Available from: English Literacy Project, 314 Dunwell House, 35 Jorissen Street, Braamfontein 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

Convergence, Special Issue on Women and Non-Formal Adult Education, Vol.11, No.4, 1988

International Council for Adult Education, 96pp.

The articles contained in this special issue focus on problems, trends and issues related to non-formal education and training programs for women in several countries and regions including Pakistan, Uganda, Canada, West Africa and Europe. The introductory article by Nelly P. Stromquist provides an overview of the development of non-formal education for women, and the sometimes negative impact programs have had on women. Stromquist explores the question of what kinds of non-formal education are needed by women, namely, those which empower women to understand their situation and undertake efforts to improve it.

Cost: Single copies: US$6, Subscriptions: $21 yearly for Africa, Asia, Latin America, $25 yearly elsewhere.
Available from: ICAE, 720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 2R4.

Economic Literacy

Excerpted From Newsletter 42, "Making Connections: Economics and Women's Lives," June 1989 Of *The Tribune: A Women and Development Quarterly.*

Our lives are affected by the debt crisis, inflation, devaluations, and all of the economic crises that we hear about. But these issues are not the problem. They are symptoms or results of a larger economic system.

If we are going to work to make economic systems more responsive to people's needs, maybe we need to become "economically literate."

Economic Literacy is...

* Understanding how the economy works and its relationship to our daily lives.
* Understanding that the economy is not a neutral thing, nor is it beyond our control.
* Understanding the connection between economic power and political power.
* Understanding how changes in the economy have different impacts on women and men. The debt crisis, inflation, devaluations and all economic policies need to be explored from a women's perspective.
* Understanding how women's work in the family and in the household is an integral part of the economy and must be given economic value.
* Taking into consideration the sexual division of labour in the family, the household and the workforce.

You do not need to be an economist to educate yourself about economics and then organize training and educational sessions, public meetings and other initiatives to spread understanding of economic issues to thousands of women. In "Making Connections: Economics and Women's Lives," specific training activities that you might want to use are suggested for building economic literacy.

For this issue and a listing of materials write to:
International Women's Tribune Centre 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.
Most IWTC publications are free to people from the Third World.

TRAINING FOR EMPOWERMENT

This kit is very powerful for us. The sharing of both methodologies and contexts is what makes it so significant. It is also an important tool for building South-South consciousness and the vital links we need between educators in Africa and Latin America. *Shirley Walters, Centre of Continuing and Adult Education, University of the Western Cape, South Africa*

The South-South exchange that took four Mozambican literacy workers to spend four months learning with popular educators in Nicaragua and Brazil had an important impact on literacy work in Mozambique. The four went back to work in a pilot centre for training literacy workers where their new insights and energies injected vitality and creativity to literacy staff training.

Another outcome of the trip is a kit of materials for training trainers called "Training for Empowerment." It offers a hands-on introduction to popular education through the eyes of the educators from Mozambique. It contains a ***User's Guide*** which emphasizes that it is not a training programme ready-made but a set of suggestions, to be adapted creatively to the user's context. There are ***3 Background Papers***, one reflecting on South-South exchanges as an approach to staff training, a second containing a message from Latin American popular educators to their African counterparts, and the third giving a brief overview of education in Mozambique.

The heart of the kit is made up of worksheets describing ***9 Activities and Tools*** encountered in literacy work in Latin America. The nine worksheets each include a vignette of the Nicaraguan or Brazilian group met using the activity, locating the activity firmly in its own context. There is some indication of the theoretical significance of the activity and detailed descriptions of how to use and adapt these tools and activities for the user's situation.

The final section of contains resources. These include written resources on both the theory and practice of popular education and a description of the popular education groups that the educators from Mozambique met in Nicaragua and Brazil. The kit will also be of real interest to those training frontline workers in the field of co-operative, community and labour education.

The kit is being published by the National Directorate of Adult Education in Mozambique and the International Council for Adult Education. It is available in English, Portuguese and French

Available from: International Council for Adult Education
720 Bathurst St., Ste. 500, Toronto,
Canada M5S 2R4
$15

LITERACY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

By Rachel Martin

A record of one teacher's progress toward making her classroom practice align with her goals. Thoughts on what's working, what isn't, and the questions that remain, which together provide a curriculum development tool for other literacy workers immersed in the same process.

$5.00 US (including postage)
Available from: Rachel Martin
302 Arlington Street
Watertown, MA 02172
U.S.A.

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